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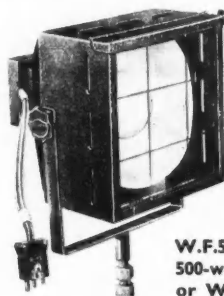
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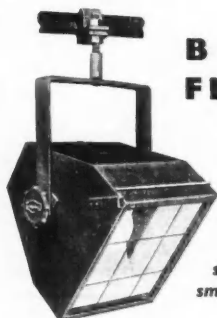


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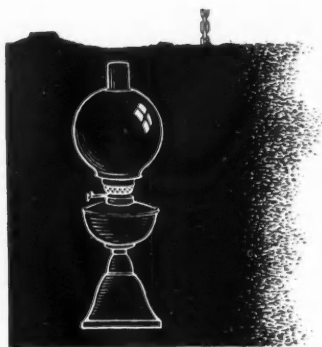
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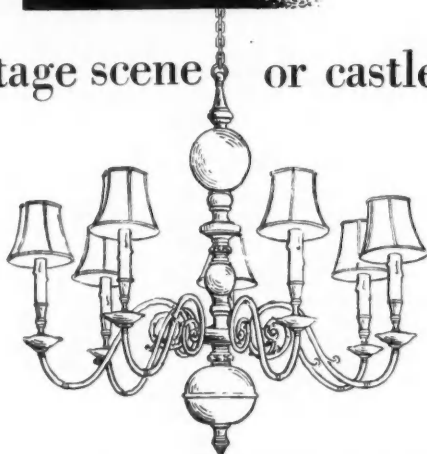
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## *The Quarterly Theatre Review*

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NEW SERIES

SPRING 1956

NUMBER 40

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Editor: E. Martin Browne, C.B.E.      Associate Editor: Doris Hutton

#### Advisory Committee:

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# EDITORIAL

**I**N amateur as in professional drama, the audience has a powerful influence on the standard of quality. Those who want to draw big houses and make money try to "give the audience what it wants": those who want to do interesting plays and experimental productions try to "educate" or to woo the audience into sharing their adventure. But in either case the audience is the ultimate arbiter upon the success of the resulting performance.

In general the audience approaches an amateur show more tolerantly than a professional one. Some members of the audience may have personal associations with the players; but apart from this there is a tendency to make allowances. "All for your delight we are not here", says Quince; and his unconscious truthfulness applies to many of his amateur descendants, who are here partly for their own social or educational or remedial benefit. Knowing this, their audience may instinctively compromise on standards: and criticism may take colour from that compromise.

In the long run, this does not benefit even the players themselves. If audiences and critics are honest about standards, the company will be spurred on to maintain them, and by doing so will retain their audience—who will not come for long to see a company they know to be poor.

These considerations apply with special force to the dramatic work of young people. To them should be said boldly: "If you don't take the trouble to do it well, don't do it at all." Just because, in drama more than in the other arts, sheer exuberance can deceive an audience, it is necessary to say this, for the future both of the art and of the young players.

Plenty of fine and serious work is done by them. Among the many school productions seen at Christmas were some which deservedly won an emotional response from an adult audience. In a county festival one can meet a youth club which outshines its elders and gives a performance not only vital but also true and deeply felt. With these shows a great deal of trouble has been taken, as is evident in productions carefully planned and finished and in acting performances rehearsed with thoroughness and keenness. Some of these interpretations may have been taught rather than experienced; especially in schools, drilling can bring a kind of success. But in the best work of young companies there is a freshness of imagination that can make a familiar phrase shine for the hearer like a new-minted coin.

None of this can be achieved without hard work and it is no service to the theatre or to young people who are keen on it to accept slovenliness. This is true most of all in regard to those who should be the leaders of the theatre's new generation, the university students. British universities do not look kindly upon the drama as a curricular subject. Perhaps this is why the kind of production which consists of a bright idea quite inadequately worked out, or an incomprehensible performance of a play far too difficult for the actors, is so placidly accepted. Students too often think that all they have to do is to have the idea; the audience will pick it up somehow. The theatre is an art of communication; and that communication is achieved only by those who have studied the art.

IRENE WORTH as Argia in "The Queen and the Rebels" at the Haymarket Theatre.  
Photograph by Angus McBean.

# PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

By J. W. LAMBERT

ONCE again all the best things have come from the Continent or from the past. Luckily my duty is to record what we have received rather than bemoan what we are missing; no need here to exercise those old warhorses—one sound, the other spavined—our slow progress towards a National Theatre (not much encouraged by the current example of the Comédie Française) and the absorption of too many leading players into the Shakespeare industry.

One rather fine work has reached us, thanks to the mastiff determination of Donald Wolfitt—Fritz Hochwälder's *The Strong Are Lonely*. This is not, of course, a short-winded "play of ideas": it is a play of emotional situations with intellectual substance behind them. It confronts us with the dreadful fate of a Jesuit in seventeenth-century Paraguay who has organised a primitive land for the greatest good of the greatest number, and who realises too late that in so doing he has betrayed the faith he lives by and for. In a series of scenes we are shown him up against the settlers, the churchmen, the Spanish government. All this he can face with disdain; even the displeasure of his superiors in the Society of Jesus, though terrible, does not quite deflect him; he is broken only when he is made to realise that the Indians he converts are interested solely in material benefits.

This is a wonderful part for a passionate actor. Mr. Wolfitt made a good deal of it, and was especially fine when he knelt to the moment of ultimate disillusion. Yet he spoiled things a little by adopting an air of querulous defeat from the start, by peering defensively when he should have stared proudly, by whinnying when he should have bayed. He was at his best, significantly, in his scenes with the two best actors in a shaky support-

ing company: Robert Harris, the reluctant plenipotentiary from Spain, keenly aware of the sad paradox of his mission; and Ernest Milton, a foppish visitor who emerges as a very important Jesuit, forcing a strange, glittering power through his prinking walk and croaking drawl. Margaret Webster's production was sound in conception but sketchily executed in a cramped set, and the translation decidedly stiff. At no point could the London version be compared favourably with that given in Paris; but the quality of the piece survived.

Has Ugo Betti's quality survived also? If so, I cannot think very highly of it. *The Burnt Flowerbed* was given what seemed to me a good performance at the Arts, and emerged as a good if rather prosy play. Now we have seen two more, but—alas!—in decidedly unsatisfactory performances. Would *The Queen and the Rebels* make a splendid vehicle for a high-powered emotional actress? Perhaps so; but to my mind Irene Worth was more than a little o'erparted. She never, for me, began to establish the character of a prostitute raised from squalor to spiritual nobility by the nagging of a spoiled priest turned revolutionary, and the chance of saving another woman's life. One cannot impersonate a street-walker simply by wearing a pair of flashy shoes and sticking out a hip. Miss Worth's voice and bearing expressed the essence of gentility, and even a sort of condescension. Certainly she was not much helped by a rather heavy-handed production. Even Leo McKern, as a dour conspiratorial leader—a part very similar to the one he played in *The Burnt Flowerbed*—was rather dull. Only Gwendoline Watford—an actress new to me—wrung some true feeling from the real, refugee queen, a pitiful creature.

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"SUMMERTIME" by Ugo Betti at the Apollo Theatre. Esma Cannon, Vivienne Drummond and Mark Dignam. Photograph by Armstrong Jones.

*Rebels* was laboured, that of *Summertime* was a striking exercise in the elephantine skittish; Peter Hall's first work in the commercial theatre contrasts sadly with his achievements at the Arts. The play is a pleasant little girl-gets-boy frolic, not much harmed, I dare say, by being set back fifty years; James Bailey's period costumes were prettily comic. Geraldine McEwan chirped with her usual husky, tip-tilted charm, Mark Dignam contributed a pleasing sketch of an angry ass. Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies and Esma Cannon indulged in tiresome prodigies of fluttering and gabbling as a pair of extravagant aunts. Dirk Bogarde, who should have displayed a silly, likeable sulkiness, elected

to play the part as a rough sketch for *Peter Pan*, with the singular result that all one's sympathies were switched to his unsuccessful rival, expanded by Michael Gwynne with a woolly, indeed sheepish, appeal which quite upset the balance of the play, but was none the less delightful.

The United States has sent us two pieces. Paul Osborn's pre-war piece *Morning's at Seven* is a kindly, but not sentimental, study in family stagnation and the slow currents of small-town life; its spirit is remarkably well caught by a largely English cast and Jack Minster's production. Frederick Piper's dissatisfied builder expresses, in his plaintive enquiries about the point of his

existence, a world of dogged frustration; Mona Washbourne's beady, bird-like bobs and chuckles perfectly embody the watchful tranquillity of a happy but second-best marriage; Margaret Vines, with a dragging step and a drained voice, the corrosion of a long, suspect, distracting affection. Equally true and touching is Tucker McGuire's shiny nose and eager empty prattle as a girl on the threshold of middle age who still cannot jog into church her reluctant lover; Peter Jones apprehensive, adenoidal evasions catch him exactly. How sharply, too, across the muted bumbling of this middling family, cuts the cynical yet envious superiority of Charles Heslop, the local Nietzsche, warmed at last by their helpless affection, an emaciated turkey-cock made at home in the chicken-run. All in all, this little play is one of the pleasantest to have crossed the Atlantic, or for that matter the Channel, for some time.

*Anniversary Waltz*, on the other hand, is simply a routine comedy, written round a husband and wife, the wife's parents, two children and a television set. Barbara Kelly smiles, Bernard Braden scowls and the television set explodes. For once we can claim to have produced a rather better farcical comedy of our own in *Small Hotel* by Rex Frost, whose tiny play is fun (we all enjoy seeing the bumptious bumped) and displays a neat turn of phrase. Gordon Harker, an old and imperfectly honest waiter, mumbles and creaks with an ageless mischief; his waitress protégée, Eleanore Bryan, is deliciously *jeune fille*, Marjorie Fielding exquisitely *grande dame*, and Anthony Sharp raspingly odious as an efficiency expert with a voice like a disciplined duck's.

Two thrillers: *Suspect*, like Mr. Harker, rumbled and creaked; it was written before the war, and although it offered an opportunity for Flora Robson to exercise her talent for appearing harrowed and horrifying at the same time, a tall, grey, anguished shadow, it hardly justified resurrection. In *The Whole Truth* Philip Mackie has con-

structed a rather neater piece, marred by a conventionally weak *dénouement*. Leslie Phillips, smooth and blond and ingratiating, makes an excellently ingenious villain.

The Arts Theatre has recently given us an oddity—*Komuso*, by the late Robert Nichols, the fruit of his stay in Japan. A rather consciously poetic tale of adultery, haunting, and legend-inspired death, its elements of Western comedy and Eastern dooms did not mix.

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Four revivals yielded a richer bouquet of blessings, though not without their darnel, hemlock and rank fumitory. At the enormous Saville theatre John Clements opened his "classic season" with Max Faber's version of *The Wild Duck*, in Murray Macdonald's interesting production; and, in case this sounds cold commendation, let me hasten to add that it was often most affecting—it is long since the theatre has felt a more poignant stab of pain than that which Angela Baddeley's patient Gina flung out at the sight of her dead child, the climax of a beautifully judged performance. The tiny twitch of the cheek with which Dorothy Tutin's Hedwig took her father's petulant rebuff—"Go away, go away"—expressed a world of wounded faith; her simply spoken "I can't go on being miserable like this until I'm grown up" plumbed, in its avoidance of easy pathos, a deep well of despairing innocence. Laurence Hardy's tender brutality made the most of Relling's self-contemptuous, compassionate common-sense.

But the playing of the two principal male parts gave the play a curious emphasis. Emlyn Williams' Hjalmar had a self-consciously conspiratorial air at times; the spineless silly too much resembled Tartuffe—whether by intention, or because this remained a rather external impersonation I can't be sure. Michael Gough, as Gregers, the dreadful do-gooder, gave his best performance for some time. But Gregers, like



"SMALL HOTEL" at St. Martin's Theatre. Eleanore Bryan, Marjorie Fielding and Gordon Harker. Photograph by Denis de Marney.

Hedda Gabler, is a character drawn in lines of sardonic comedy; he needs a touch of unctious. Mr. Gough, burrowing into other people's lives like a demonic terrier, struck too extreme a note—and failed (this is an acid test) to make Gregers' idiotic speeches sound as though they could possibly have been spoken by anyone at any period. His performance, in fact, was too tragic and too specifically modern in tone; and it had the paradoxical effect of making the play seem old-fashioned.

On to the Bard; and on, in particular, to the much bruited *Hamlet* of Peter Brook and Paul Scofield. It seemed to me a total failure for both of them. Mr. Brook overloaded the action with producer's business. His stage, admittedly reduced in Wakhevitch's overarching leaden lobster-pot, was often terribly crowded. Mr. Scofield seemed to be playing according to some scheme unguessable by a mere member

of the audience. True, his battered wistfulness was sympathetic if monotonous; but how to relate his alternations of loud and soft, fast and slow, high and low, to the words he was speaking? These vocal exercises seemed wholly arbitrary. A roar of "murder" pumped false drama into his encounter with the ghost, the closet scene (with a rather impassive Diana Wynyard) fell as dead as Polonius at his feet; and at the moment of his own marvellous end there was no dying fall; he simply stopped. Warmth, relish, a beating heart entered the play only with Alec Clunes' Claudius—a villain, but capable of gentleness, as in his dealings with the mad Ophelia; and I seem to be the only man in London who found Mary Ure's singing of Thomas Eastwood's settings disturbing and harshly beautiful.

At the Old Vic Michael Benthall's *The Winter's Tale* seemed ill-considered,



DOROTHY TUTIN and GEORGE RELPH in "The Wild Duck" at the Saville Theatre. Photograph by Houston Rogers.

not blending fantasy and realism but tumbling between the two. Paul Rogers' Leontes started as a gangster-king, dissipated our interest by unremitting noise before the interval, and only just recovered it afterwards, in the quiet wonder of that deeply satisfying happy ending. John Neville's spiv-like Autolycus was admirable; properly jaunty, cheap without being nasty.

A certain vulgarity, though, is apt to mar Mr. Benthall's direction. This fail-

ing led him to write additional jokes, on the theme of Englishmen speaking French, into *Henry V*. That incidental complaint apart, I have nothing but praise for this production—the second first-class version of the play which the Old Vic has given us in five years. Not so fine as *Henry IV*, it is none the less astonishingly rich in humanity—and incidentally contains almost as many lines pointing up the horrors of war as celebrating martial glory. The company

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seemed completely at home in it. The English were blunt and homespun, the French foppish, even effete, but by no means caricatured. Audrey Cruddas's sets were quick and suggestive (borrowing a backcloth map from Theatre Workshop and self-propelled scenery from Mr. Noguchi). Of all the admirably played supporting parts one stood out—Dudley Jones' Fluellen. As different as could be from the same actor's Sir Hugh in *The Merry Wives*, and equally far from being a mere stage Welshman, this gallant, strutting, old-fashioned little gamecock sprang superbly to life; though he was continually amusing, never once did Mr. Jones play for a laugh; he touched the nerve of true comic acting which brings tears to the eyes. Richard Burton, with a far more delicately graded range, and

no longer hampered by the need to match the King's character with young Prince Hal's (as he was at Stratford in 1951), filled out a man nervously alert, but never sullen; from a relaxed start he worked up an exciting rhythm of nervous tension—through the brisk, sardonic dispatch of the three traitors to the half-climax at Harfleur—taken without embarrassment as a set-piece—down again to the brooding of the long night watch, up to the near-hysterical pitch of Agincourt, and gaily down at last to the deft, lighthearted play of tongues with Kate. Mercurial, almost at times unreliable, not above cruel practical jokes, yet always a little thoughtful, he made not a fairy-tale prince but an entirely credible leader of men, of a type it is luckily no longer obligatory for us to despise.

## ON LEANING OVER A STREAM

By A. L. PATTISSON

CAN a satisfactory play in poetic prose be written by an Englishman? To still the doubts that many of us felt a year or two ago, John Whiting's *Marching Song* came swinging into the theatre. Now, when he is said to be writing a new play, is a good time to examine his method.

When in an earlier article I spoke of poetic-prose drama, I had envisaged a prose structure built with poetic bricks. John Whiting has used prose bricks to build a poetic structure. What does that mean? Take a sample prose structure built of what I call prose bricks. "At sunset call me to a peaceful summer-house and let us hear Ishak play and sing." Now take away some of the plain language and replace it with various types of poetic building material.

A favourite poetic brick is the image. Replace "sunset" with some imagery then, and write: "At evening, when God flings roses through the sky." Another poetic brick is the evocative

word in place of the word of common usage. For "a peaceful summer-house" write: "some calm pavilion." Rhythm is much used in the construction of poetry; in place of "let us hear Ishak play and sing", phrase the thought liltily and write: "and let us hear Ishak play, and let us hear Ishak sing." We now have a prose structure built of poetic bricks, which reads: "At evening when God flings roses through the sky, call me then to some calm pavilion, and let us hear Ishak play and let us hear Ishak sing."

This I take to be poetic prose, old style; poetic because it is made of poetic ingredients; prose because despite the ingredients no additional overtones or undertones of significance have been conveyed beyond what is expressed by the plain prose version of the sentence; except that perhaps prose ingredients would be less characteristic of the man who concocts the sentence, the poetical confectioner of Baghdad. Overtones of

characterisation, however, should pertain to all competent stage dialogue, prose as well as poetic.

Now take a piece of poetic prose, new style, from *Marching Song*:

CATHERINE: . . . Father and the Doctor do their jobs professionally and Harry once made very good films.

RUPERT: So they've filled your life for the past seven years, in place of the others I remember.

CATHERINE: The others?

RUPERT: The men who dressed your hair and painted your face, designed your clothes and fitted your shoes.

Who will deny that such dialogue is built of solid prose? But wherein is it poetic? Let's turn up another part of the play. The prime minister has requested Rupert to take his own life.

RUPERT: . . . Cadmus knows I'll do what he asks because there is no future action for me. He knows there is nothing here—nothing anywhere to detain me.

CATHERINE: I am here.

RUPERT: I'm no longer in love with you Catherine.

A few lines later a young girl joins the scene.

RUPERT: . . . What's your name?

CATHERINE: She's called Dido.

DIDO: . . . Blame my father. He was an archaeologist. Always grubbing in the past. Disgusting occupation.

Still the bricks are prose, but isn't it beginning to be possible to guess how such bricks might be put together to build a kind of poetry? A few more dips into the dialogue and then we will go back and examine our fragments more closely.

RUPERT: I'd like you to stay with me through the rest of the night. . . .

DIDO: You will say exactly what you mean, won't you?

RUPERT: I mean only that. Stay with me until first light. . . .

Half a dozen pages later we get:

BRUNO: I was stationed in the Eastern Provinces last year.

RUPERT: Ah! Then you, too, have heard the goat-singers.

BRUNO: Yes, sir. Those songs.

RUPERT: You know what they are?

BRUNO: The goat songs? Of course.

RUPERT: Well?

BRUNO: They are obscene.

RUPERT: (after a pause) Obscene?

BRUNO: It is the goat-herd's expression of love—to his goats. The songs don't make sense.

RUPERT: Go on.

BRUNO: They're just filth. That's all.

Then further down the page:

RUPERT: Have you ever put your faith in love songs, Captain Hurst? Believing them to be something more? . . .

This duologue continues until Dido re-enters.

DIDO: I'm sorry I had to leave you.

Rupert eventually takes his own life, and we come to:

CATHERINE: . . . I'd like to begin to live again. I think I can. Help me.

But Dido cannot be persuaded to stay.

DIDO: I like you Catherine—always have. You're good and strong really. You can do it all without me.

CATHERINE: I can't. Rupert's dead.

But Dido leaves her with only the feeble priest, the servile doctor, and Harry the sentimental maker of films to help her pass the time. They have no comfort to offer and her cry goes up, "I'm cold!" Then it is that the inadequate, well-meaning Harry wraps his coat around her, and thereupon Dido returns.

Now for the overtones of poetry. The prose of it is that General Rupert Forster has been away from Catherine seven years, first soldiering, then defeated, disgraced and imprisoned. At the opening of the play he has just been released and sent back to her.

Remembering that Catherine's other name is de Troyes, meaning "of Troy", that Dido's other name is Morgen, meaning "morning", that the play is entitled *Marching Song*, which is something that gives a soldier heart to keep on marching, glance back over my selected fragments. Separately each of them is merely a piece of prose dialogue. Taken in conjunction each carries the overtone of a marching song, or of the need for a marching song. Sometimes



for Catherine the song grows faint, sometimes for Rupert it grows distasteful, and at these times their will to go forward, their will to live, weakens.

So then, accompanying the factual story of Rupert and Catherine in relation to Dido and Cadmus we have as overtone a marching song, making a two-tone poetry; but two tones alone add up to poor, thin stuff. Lean closer over our fragments then and see what more they reveal.

Though time and place are never explicit in *Marching Song*, a defeated General Rupert Forster in a mid-twentieth century play must by implication be German. Can we detect beneath our fragments then an undertone of defeated Germany's plight? The fashionable society once concerned with *coiffure*, cosmetics, clothes, now keeping going on drugs, religion and the films; the militarist with no future because his army is disbanded, the sentimentalist trying to lure him back to past romance, extreme youth impatient and disgusted with the past, all could be German. More subtly, an honest man, awakened to the ugly reality of Hitler's romantic dreams, is reflected in Rupert's discovery of the true meaning of the goat songs. Finally a loan from America—Harry's coat offered in kindness—brings in its train renewal of life, youth, hope.

The play then is defeated Germany allegorically depicted? Only if we are prepared for a change from the usually accepted meaning of the word "allegory". Discussing *Marching Song* we cannot say with precision that one character represents this, another that, that Rupert represents Germany, Harry America, for Rupert also represents professional soldiering, Harry the cinema, Rupert the will to conquer, Harry vulgar sentimentality, and Dido can be taken for youth, hope, animal vitality, love or the will to live. As for Catherine, she is at one and the same time the beautiful woman from Troy for whose sake wars were fought, the escapist habit of retreat into the past,

civilisation in general, Western civilisation in particular; she is come all the way from ancient Hellas, but now because of the loss through war of her men of heroic stature, is very near to losing the will to continue the march, but because "good and strong really" is able to "begin to live again". And still deep below all these interpretations of Catherine, like the firm earth of a river-bed under a flowing river, Catherine is the earth herself, from time to time scorched by war and seemingly rendered barren, only to show herself capable of flowering once more and putting forth new fruit.

Does all this seem confused? Yes, confused in the way that reality itself is confused. Have you ever leaned upon the parapet of a bridge and studied what is below you? At first you see the shining surface of water, coloured a luminous brown and ruffled by the wind. Upon that surface a dragonfly or an old dry leaf is borne down stream. Then you notice patches of blue on the brown. Does this mean that parts of the water are blue? Of course not; while staring at the water you can see reflections of the sky. Those dark moving shapes, then, are they moving through the air? Birds, perhaps, without wings? No, they are fish, moving through the water, below the surface of the water. What of the static shapes, not unlike fish? Are they poised in the water, or resting on the water, or hovering over the water? They are pebbles at the bottom of the water. They rest on the brownness which is the bed of the stream, which is the earth. And those two pinkish discs directly below our leaning heads? They are reflections in the water of your face and mine!

I have not listed everything that might be seen in our stream, any more than I have listed everything that might be seen in John Whiting's work: probably there is much in both that I have not even perceived. Maybe I have said enough, though, to make clear what I mean by poetic prose new style:



perhaps also said enough to indicate an approach to such a play as *Marching Song*.

*Marching Song* is, however, no isolated example of the new look in allegory; it is merely the fullest and most exact example to date. Once we grasp what John Whiting is up to we begin to notice other writers trying to play the same game. Think of the baby struggling to get itself born throughout *Misery Me*, while the young couple imagine they are going to end their lives. Think of Colby, "The Con-

fidential Clerk," who is at the same time the peace of mind that all the other characters are striving to become possessed of, and yet is himself a character striving to become possessed of peace of mind. Glance back, if you like, over this article and note how a carefully argued theory about poetic prose can, at the same time, describe what may be seen by leaning over that particular bend in the stream of English dramatic writing, where the first half of the twentieth century flows into the second.

## AGAINST SOME PART OF POLAND

By ZBIGNIEW RASZEWSKI

HAMLET: Good sir, whose powers are these?

CAPTAIN: They are of Norway, sir.

HAMLET: How purpos'd, sir, I pray you?

CAPTAIN: Against some part of Poland.

*Hamlet*, iv, 4.

THE literal sense of this warlike motto may seem out of place at a time when the principle of co-existence, of a revision of attitude between East and West, of resuming broken or slackened cultural relations, is the order of the day. On the other hand, at a time like this it is important to remember the fine tradition of cultural exchanges which took place between countries even so apparently distant in their historical development, so contrasting in their national fortunes, as Britain and Poland.

It is obvious that, as in the case of so many other nations, our greatest debt to Britain is through William Shakespeare, but we on our part may claim that our nation is among those which have incorporated his work most intimately into their national heritage. Our acquaintance with Shakespeare is of very long standing. Even should criticism reject the mention of Poland in *Hamlet* as unimportant, and that of "sledded Polacks" as simply non-existent, it is worth remembering that

such references could be quite natural in Shakespeare's time. Poland was then one of the largest powers of Europe with a flourishing culture. Companies of English strolling players, which appeared on the Continent at the end of the sixteenth century, soon reached our frontiers. They landed in the main seaports of the Kingdom of Poland—Gdansk (Danzig) and Elblag (Elbing). In both there were branches of an English trading company and a brisk export of corn and timber rendered communication with England comparatively easy.

The visits of English players grew more and more frequent and they advanced further East along the coast to Krolewicz (Königsberg) in what later became East Prussia. The Kurfürst Johann Sigismund took them hence to Warsaw to add splendour to the homage he rendered to King Sigismund III. Their first performance in the Polish capital probably took place on November 16th, 1611. The Kurfürst did not spare any expense in

making the spectacle as magnificent as possible. He spent large sums upon splendid dresses, such as the one illustrated here. The plays were staged in the royal castle (blown up by Hitler's troops in 1944) and it is very

Asken, who served Sigismund III for many years. His stay at the court of Ladislas IV, Sigismund's son, is recorded in 1636, 1639 and 1641. One of the members of Asken's company was the famous "pickled herring",



COSTUME OF AN ENGLISH ACTOR who visited Warsaw in 1611.  
Photograph by J. Swiderski.

probable that Shakespeare's works were included for the company, apparently that of John Green, had five of his plays in their repertory. The same company played in Warsaw in 1616 and 1618, and was succeeded by that of Aaron

Robert Reinold, who remained in Poland till his death in Warsaw about 1641, and whose widow received a royal pension. Even after the extinction of the House of Wasa, we meet English players in the country, such as George

Benteley who attended the coronation feast in Cracow in 1669. Those visits had an undeniable influence upon Polish theatrical life, although it was too weak to absorb the great English achievements. Shakespeare was still staged by foreign companies at the beginning of the eighteenth century and even later, during the period of the nation's great cultural revival. A French company played *Romeo and Juliet* in 1778, a German one staged *Hamlet* in 1781 and *King Lear* in 1793.

Polish versions of Shakespeare appeared in our native language comparatively early and at once took an astonishingly firm hold of the Polish stage. *Hamlet* was first played in Polish in 1797 by Wojciech Boguslawski, the great actor-manager, playwright and teacher of dramatic art, in his own translation. The reception of Shakespeare coincided with a stormy period in our history; the struggle for political liberty was a suitable background for the enjoyment of the great conflicts and passions of his plays. Owing to the endeavours of Boguslawski five of the tragedies were staged in Polish towns up to 1812, and between 1820 and 1836 one more tragedy and two comedies were added. From that time Shakespeare remains inseparably connected with our culture. Polish drama, which had an enormously important part to play in the life of the oppressed nation, is permeated through and through with the Shakespearean spirit. Our greatest dramatist of the nineteenth century, Juliusz Slowacki, cried:

Shakespeare! Thy spirit raised a mount to Heaven

Higher than mountains of God's own creation. Slowacki's thorough study of Shakespeare was based not only on reading, for one of his letters from London in 1831 described his impressions of Kean's interpretation of Richard III.

The intimate relation of our theatre with Shakespeare lasts down to the present day. During a short initial period we did not translate his work from the originals, but from adaptations

by F. L. Schröder, L. S. Mercier, J. F. Ducis and others, but even at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Shakespeare was still played in adaptations in England, this practice was violently attacked by many of our critics. The second half of the nineteenth century brought us a closer contact with the originals.

From the eighteen-sixties to the second World War, twenty-seven plays of Shakespeare were staged in Poland in new translations. Four editions of the complete works appeared during that period; a fifth, containing entirely new translations, is now in preparation. One single theatre, the Teatr Polski in Warsaw, gave, during the first twenty-five years of its existence (1913-1938), 652 performances of Shakespeare, every fifteenth night being devoted to his plays.

The Shakespeare Festival in 1946 was a confirmation of the poet's popularity. It was opened on his birthday, April 23rd, and thirteen companies in eleven towns staged nine plays. The Festival was closed on August 31st, 1947, and prizes were awarded for outstanding achievements in acting and scenic design. The cult of Shakespeare thus became a matter of concern to the State and to the whole nation.

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Did Poland ever try to repay her debt to Shakespeare's mother country? This was probably the question Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska) (1840-1909) put to herself when she crossed the threshold of Shakespeare's birthplace on October 14th, 1881. She was entitled to ask this question as she made the first step, and a great one, towards repaying the cultural debt. We still look at the phenomenon of Modjeska with astonishment. Starting her career in a provincial touring company she became in seven years the first actress of Warsaw, registering success in the greatest Shakespearean parts. A year in the United States, where she arrived in 1876, was enough for her to master

the language and to appear as a star on the American stage. Her triumph in San Francisco opened her unique career as a bilingual actress, dividing her hard-working life between the stages of

half. The autumn of the same year was spent in touring Britain and the winter season of 1880-81 found Modjeska again at the Court Theatre. Besides playing in Dumas (*La Dame aux*



HELENA MODRZEJEWSKA (Modjeska) as Schiller's Mary Stuart in Warsaw.

Poland and America. From 1880 the British stage was added; her first appearance in May at the Court Theatre in London proved so successful that what was intended as a short tour developed into a stay of a year and a

half. The autumn of the same year was spent in touring Britain and the winter season of 1880-81 found Modjeska again at the Court Theatre. Besides playing in Dumas (*La Dame aux*

Romeo, she was received with great enthusiasm by the London public as "a woman of genius". In 1885, during four months at the Lyceum in London, and on her third tour of Britain, she played a new Shakespearean role, Rosalind in *As You Like It*. "Outbursts of sincere enthusiasm" were observed by the critics during these performances. Had she any lasting influence on English, as she certainly had upon American theatrical art? It would be interesting to have the views of historians of the English theatre.

An actress playing successfully in a foreign language does not appear often; the phenomenon of Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski in the field of literature is the only comparison that suggests itself. No wonder, then, that our representatives upon the English stage were more numerous in musical theatre. The long succession of Polish opera singers who won applause in London opens in 1825 with the contralto Kornega, but the major successes of our singers came at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Marcelina Kochanska-Sembrich, Jan, Edward and Józefina Reszke, Władysław Mierzwinski, Janina Korolewicz-Waydowa were once well known to the *habitués* of Covent Garden.

Polish ballet-masters and dancers also won applause on the banks of the Thames and had indubitably some formative influence upon modern English ballet. The names of Nizynski (Nijinsky), Wójcikowski and Idzikowski speak for themselves. Polish productions were also included in the repertory of Pavlova, to mention only *The Wedding at Ojców* with music by Kurpinski staged by one of our most eminent scenic artists, Wincenty Drabik. The choreographer was Pianowski. Polish dancers, under the management of Bronisława Nizynska, appeared at Covent Garden in 1937 in *The Legend of Cracow*, *The Song of the Earth* and *Apollo and a Girl*. This was probably the first occasion on which a complete Polish

ensemble visited the British Isles.

\* \* \*

The influence of Shakespeare on the Polish theatre should not overshadow another interesting page of our cultural relations, on which the chief name is that of George Bernard Shaw. We began to stage his works in 1904, only a little later than the Germans who were mainly responsible for spreading his fame on the Continent. The comedies of the sharp-tongued Irishman became at once the daily fare of our theatres. In 1908, four years after the first productions of Shaw in Poland, the company directed by one of our most eminent dramatists, Gabriela Zapolska, took *Arms and the Man* on tour across the southern part of our country. The greatest part in propagating G.B.S. in Poland fell, however, to the Teatr Polski in Warsaw. Between 1913 and 1938 Shaw was the most popular author there, being second only to Shakespeare. Seventeen of his plays had altogether 569 performances, *Pygmalion* with 179 performances heading the list. *The Apple Cart* was given its world première in Warsaw on June 14th, 1929, not without some risk. Shaw wrote to Szyfman, manager of the theatre, on October 18th, 1929: "The Germans were furious and if Sobieniowski (the Polish translator) had not left Malvern before Siegfried Trebitsch, there would certainly have been bloodshed!"

During recent years, we must record with sorrow, our theatrical relations and exchanges correspond in no way to these fine traditions. The British public has seen since 1939 only theatrical companies of the Polish emigration which can give little idea of what our theatre is really like to-day. And for our part, we cannot be satisfied with only memories of the splendid Sadler's Wells Ballet which we saw in 1947. We eagerly await the moment when the Old Vic and John Gielgud start for the conquest of Eastern Europe along the old route known for three hundred years—"against some part of Poland."

# ACTING ON STAGE AND SCREEN

By BERNARD MILES

*From an Address given to a joint meeting of The British Kinematograph Society and the British Film Academy by whose kind permission it is reprinted here.*

I BELIEVE an actor's identification with his rôle is necessary for all kinds of acting, whether for stage, screen, radio, or television. In other words, all acting is based on the creation of character, even when, as in the case of certain screen performances, most of the characterizing is done by the director.

If a piece of make-believe is intended for the stage it must be expressed in theatrical terms; if for the screen, in cinematic terms. Thus our inquiry is largely concerned with technique, the means whereby a characterization is conveyed to the audience.

In order to discover the difference between presenting a characterization on the stage and on the screen, imagine an actor in a stage production due to go into rehearsal in about ten days' time, and see what happens to him during the next seven or eight weeks.

First, he is given a copy of the play, a document composed almost entirely of dialogue between the various characters. Thus, from the very outset, we see that a stage production is made up almost entirely of acting. After reading the play three or four times he begins to form an impression of his part, and this is steadily clarified and developed during rehearsals (and still further during the first few weeks of performance). Soon he meets the rest of the company entrusted with the collective task of bringing the play to life, and together they rehearse for three or four weeks, getting to know each other and gradually becoming the people who inhabit the play.

From the very first rehearsal, the aim is to run the play straight through without scripts as soon as possible, and this generally happens in a week or ten days, fumblingly and full of agonized pauses, but otherwise uninterrupted. Thereafter, and until the final dress rehearsal, it is quite common to rehearse the whole play straight through once or twice or even three times a day. Thus, stage rehearsals are designed to deepen the actor's sense of continuity, and his feeling that he is part of a single stream of dramatic events.

Until the first night the producer is always at hand, checking, adjusting, encouraging, advising, cajoling, bullying, according to need. But from the first night onwards the actors are left to create the play by themselves with only the audience to help them or hinder them as the case may be.

Rehearsals are always directed into the

auditorium, which is located in a fixed position "out in front." The wording of the playbills outside the theatre is not just a figure of speech, for the play is indeed "presented" to the audience. And since that audience may number anything from 200 to two or three thousand, stage acting must be big enough in movement and in gesture, and most of all big enough in voice, to carry into the furthest corners of the auditorium. This is called "projecting" the performance, what stage people call "putting it over" or "getting it across."

Training for the stage, therefore, is a training in emphatic behaviour, which can draw attention to any point of the stage and to any detail of the play, holding it there for as long as necessary and then shifting it elsewhere.

The size of emphasis required in a theatre as big as the old Lyceum in London, seating nearly 3,000, is nowhere better described than in Gordon Craig's study of Henry Irving, where he tries to convey something of the power and beauty of Irving's performance in a famous melodrama called *The Bells*.

*While he is taking off the boots and pulling on the shoes the men at the table, who are smoking and drinking lazily, are telling in drawling tones that just before he came in they were saying that they did not remember a night like this since what was called the Polish Jew's winter.*

*By the time the speaker had got this slowly out—it was dragged purposely—Irving was buckling his second shoe, seated and leaning over it with his two long hands stretched down over the buckles. We suddenly saw these fingers stop their work; the crown of the head suddenly seemed to glitter and become frozen—and then, at the pace of the slowest and most terrified snail, the two hands, still motionless and dead, were seen to be coming up the side of the leg . . . the whole torso of the man, also seeming frozen, was gradually, and by an almost imperceptible movement, seen to be drawing up and back, as it would straighten a little, and to lean a little against the back of the chair on which he was seated.*

*Once in that position—motionless—eyes fixed ahead of him and fixed on us all—there he sat for the space of ten to twelve seconds, which, I can assure you, seemed to us all like a lifetime . . .*

That is the scale of action, both temporal and spatial, required on the stage.



Since most plays are fashioned almost entirely of dialogue, the heaviest gun in the stage actor's armoury will always be his voice, especially as it is the strongest of all character-tokens and is that part of his equipment which can be trained to carry furthest.

The stage actor's work on his rôle does not cease with the first performance. In fact, that is only the beginning of a new stage of development, for at last he has met, and from now onwards continues to meet, the other half of a complete theatrical performance, the audience. Between them, the company and eight different audiences a week bring the production to its final shape, or rather to the first of its final shapes, for the performance of a play goes on changing to the very end. Still, after three or four weeks an actor may well feel that he has begun to give a performance he would not mind submitting to criticism. (It is one of the miseries of an actor's life that critics rarely see any but his first and therefore his worst performances.)

Most actors would agree that one of the deepest satisfactions of stage acting is the opportunity it gives for polishing, deepening and refining one's work. In acting, as in every other walk of life, practice makes perfect, and it is no accident that the rôles which are inseparable from the names of particular performers are rôles which they have played hundreds and sometimes thousands of times—Irrving's *Matthias*, Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet*, Pavlova's *Swan*, Nijinski's *Faune*, Chaliapin's *Boris*, Flagstad's *Isolde* and so on.

This is how Chaliapin puts it in his autobiography:—

*The actor has made a searching study of his part; his fertile imagination has had free rein; at rehearsals he has carefully worked out his actions and intonations; by exercising strict control over his means of expression, he has attained an harmonious whole. The picture that he had in mind before the rehearsals started is now finished and complete.*

*At the first performance, he surpasses himself and makes a conquest of the audience. Has the part, then, reached its zenith?*

*No, not yet. It has still to be mellowed by performance after performance, during many years. Agreed that there is work and knowledge and talent in the picture, there still lacks one thing to perfect it, and that is practice.*

*If imagination is the mother from whom a part is born, practice is the foster-mother who encourages its normal development.*

Now take an actor chosen to play the same part in a screen version of this play.

First, the screen actor is given a shooting script, a rough blue print of the finished film, a technical document in which the relative unimportance of the actor is clearly indicated, since it contains not only dialogue and details of action, but a thousand and one directions connected with the pure mechanics of film-making, sequence and scene numbers, camera

positions and details of its movement, words like cut, dissolve, pan, sync, track, matte, dolly, montage, and so on. As a fine old stage actress, Haidee Wright, said to my wife during the shooting of *The Citadel*: "It's a machine, my dear, and I was brought up to be afraid of machines."

The film actor rarely meets his fellow performers until the first day's shooting and sometimes not even then. All his character creation must be done alone, without the boon of progressive rehearsal and the support of colleagues. The stage actor's period of study and search for the character, however brief, is followed by weeks and sometimes months, of continuing that search during both rehearsal and performance. However long and hard the film actor studies, the period of actual rehearsal, i.e. the time during which he is expected to demonstrate the transformation he has been working on, is of the very briefest. This means he must develop a specially intensive method for studying his rôle, as well as a fresh technique for expressing it.

Then a film rôle is broken up into hundreds of fragments, and it may be two or three months before the actor has rehearsed and performed his part from beginning to end. It seems to me that the disadvantages of acting one's part in small pieces in the special manner dictated by film-making, far outweigh the advantages. But in a sense it is always easier to do part of a job than to do the whole. In a film studio you can even go on doing it until you get it right. This means that you can, in theory at any rate, abandon yourself more completely than ever you would dare to do on the stage.

If an accident happens, if a prop is missing, if a moustache or a cluster of ringlets comes unstuck, if you forget your lines, you can always do the scene again. This is at least partial compensation for lack of rehearsals. The stage actor must go on at all costs. In the studio you can always see a print of your previous day's work and make adjustments both in characterization and in your expression of it, a privilege denied to the stage actor who must plant a candid observer amongst the audience before he can learn how his performance sounds and what it looks like. "Am I doing too much in such and such a place?" he asks. "Can you hear me at the back when I lower my voice or when I turn my head up stage?" "Is my make-up heavy enough?" And so on. In other words "How is it coming over?"

The film actor can see and hear the answers to all such questions at daily rushes.

Lastly, the director is present at every shot, i.e. present at the performance as well as at rehearsals, encouraging, reacting, checking, guiding, making sure that each fragment fits the vision of the finished film which he carries in his mind. Ideally, he is a mixture of critical audience and friendly critic, in equal proportions. In other words, a mixture of the



right kind of audience and the right kind of critic. Also close at hand, watching and listening with a discriminating attention that few theatre audiences could boast, are the cameraman and his crew, the boom swinger and the sound recordist, the make-up man and the hairdresser, sparks, chippies, props, painters, plasterers and so on, fifty or sixty sympathetic human beings who all know good film acting when they see it and before whom you are therefore on your mettle in much the same way as you are in the theatre when there is somebody very special out in front.

The actor who says he dislikes filming because he can't act properly without an audience, generally means that he feels lost without those tides of emotion which roll towards the stage, and which give a verdict upon his performance in no way related to its quality, as on a Bobby Soxers' night at the London Palladium or the first and last nights of a season at the Old Vic.

Here is Robert Donat on the subject:—

*There is nothing to equal the electric give-and-take of a full house, but it is false to describe an audience reaction as "subtle." All mass reaction is collective; its emotions are simple, sometimes crude and often based on hysteria. It is an undeniable stimulus but no more potent than the creative stimulus of actual endeavour. I am certain that my best has been given either in my own study or at rehearsals where there was no audience at all.*

The smaller the fragments into which a rôle is broken, the more perfect they must be. Their very brevity puts the performer into the most exacting frame of mind, to say nothing of their finality. There will be a chance to make adjustments in future fragments, but the scene you are playing now is being fixed on celluloid for good. In spite of the fact that the number of takes is theoretically unlimited, there is always the feeling that the present one might be the one eventually used, and the performance which finally appears on the screen can never be changed.

Stanislavsky realized that what an actor needs almost more than anything else is a technique for getting into the right mood night after night. We all know that a performer is sometimes inspired. How can we be sure he is always inspired? If this is a major problem on the stage, where the actor has to launch out only once and is thereafter borne along by the story itself, by the performances of his colleagues and also by the response of the audience, how much more is it a problem in the film studio, where so much is technical and mechanical, where there is no tide of emotion to ride on, no support from what has happened immediately before (the scene hasn't even been shot yet!) where you are regularly expected to perform at an imaginary spot a few inches to left or right of the camera instead of at the character you are supposed to be talking to, where the right mood must

be called up so frequently?

A final obstacle is the fact that the pieces of a rôle are hardly ever shot in their proper order, but according to the dictates of the production office, which are governed by availability of artists (especially those who have *matinées*), over-running of contracts, sequence of set-construction, weather, hotel accommodation, and a thousand other problems of pure supply, i.e., feeding sufficient of the right raw material onto the floor to keep the director and his technicians constantly occupied. It is understandable that the actor's problems should take second place to problems which in the end boil down to the hard cash without which films could not be made.

The film starts off with continuity in its scripting and it will end with continuity in the cutting room. Between script and final cut that continuity is purposely broken in order to serve the technique of film-making itself. Unluckily for him, the actor only experiences that baffling between-stage. But as soon as each detail of his part is finished it starts its onward (or should we call it homeward?) journey towards the continuity of the finished film. In the cinema it is only the director and editor who experience that deep satisfaction felt by the stage actor in playing his part right through from beginning to end at every performance. Even then they experience it in a very different fashion, not once a day for many weeks but as a single and deeply-exhausting experience spread over many months.

We have already observed that the words "Such-and-Such a company presents So-and-So in Such-and-Such a play," generally used in theatrical advertisements, are in fact true, since that is indeed what happens. Film distributors have adopted the same wording, though in the cinema it would be far more accurate to say "Such-and-Such a company presents you to So-and-So in Such-and-Such a film." Certainly the audience sits in a fixed position as in the theatre, but it is only the screening which is presented to them, not the actual performance. The director takes them in search of the performance, it is he who is the master of emphasis, directing the eye and ear of the beholder exactly where he wants to.

In fact, film direction is a perfect epitome of the rule of force, deliberately excluding the element of choice from the audience, which is made to look at and to listen to whatever broad prospect or tiny detail the director has selected for its attention. In other words, the actor need no longer present his performance as to a fixed audience because camera and microphone are placed to receive it or to receive some carefully selected detail of it from whatever position the director chooses.

Imagine a boxer moving freely round a punching bag, hitting it with varying speed and power, from every possible angle and with punches of different length, all according to

the accepted rules of boxing, its leading, its weaving, its countering, its crossing, its covering up, etc., and always taking into account the movement of the bag. So the film director, armed with camera and microphone, i.e., accompanied by an imaginary audience, moves round and round his subject exploring it at will.

Not only does the film actor no longer present his performance (except in his awareness of the camera which can scarcely be called presentation), he no longer projects it either, except as far as the camera and the microphone. In the occasional long shot this may be as far as the distance between the stage and the front row of the dress circle or even further, in which case his acting can be fairly broad. When the gap closes to what may loosely be called mid-shot, the scale must be changed to something like real life. And in a very close shot even life size is far too big, for the performance is now, as it were, under a microscope, and must be so under-projected, so de-emphasized, that in real life it would not register at all. On the stage, being inseparable from doing. In close-up it is enough to be.

When lovers gaze at each other from the closest possible range, they can read the thoughts in one another's eyes, and pack a world of meaning into the flicker of an eyelid or the most delicate sigh. So it is in a close-up, except that the film camera and the microphone approach you with neither love nor longing, but with merciless curiosity and an insatiable hunger for the truth.

This means that the film actor has to develop a new and most untheatrical gift, an acute and delicate sense of measurement. When your face is 12 feet high on the screen you must be able to express your thoughts with a precision which would have no meaning at all in the theatre and those thoughts must be utterly true to the character you are playing. Not only must you tell the truth but you must be sure that it looks like the truth, or those two arch lie-detectors, the camera and the microphone, will be sure to give you away.

Once again it is largely a question of technique, and technique is governed by means of expression. In the theatre the voice is all-important, in the film studio the eye.

This change of gear from voice to eyes is perhaps the biggest of all the technical differences between stage acting and film acting. In order to attract the attention of 3,000 people in the old Lyceum, we have seen how Irving used a slow movement of his whole body, also how he arranged to be bending down over his boots when the cue "purposely dragged out" was spoken, so that he could hold the audience in suspense before revealing to them what effect the fatal words had had. We also noticed that his hands moved up the side of his legs "at the pace of the slowest and most terrified snail," that his torso was

"gradually" seen to be drawing up and back and that this one piece of business seemed to last "a life-time." On the screen that would all be conveyed in close-up, with only the eyes and perhaps the lips seen to move, and then only very slightly.

Just as the stage actor soon "gets the feel" of whatever theatre he is playing in and pitches his performance accordingly, so the film actor must learn, as if by second nature, to translate whatever he is doing into terms of what it will look like on the screen. Just as the cameraman uses a light meter to guard against over- or under-exposure, so the actor needs an emotion meter to guard him against over- or under-expression, an apparatus for pre-selecting the "gear" in which he plays each particular shot.

I remember, during the shooting of *Pastor Hall*, how Roy Boulting managed to solve this problem of gear-changing for the late Sir Seymour Hicks, a stage actor of immense experience and vitality, who, if not entirely new to films, had certainly made none since the early silent days. When he came to rehearse his first scene he went through it just as if he had been on the stage. It was magnificent and absolutely true to character, but far too big, and all the director's most subtle and sweet-tempered efforts to make him play it in a lower key were unavailing. He simply couldn't believe that what he had been doing for fifty years and what had carried him to the top of the tree was not right.

In the end Roy Boulting said: "Let's do one your way and one my way and you shall choose which print we finally use." To this Seymour agreed and when he saw the rushes next morning he was, of course, utterly convinced.

I also remember that delightful actor, Edward Rigby, telling a group of colleagues how Sam Wood had praised him to the skies for the way he rehearsed one of his scenes in *A Yank at Oxford*, but how he had ended the praise by saying: "Could you give me about a quarter of it when we come to shoot?"

In the theatre the actor is the chief emphasis-marker. It is true that much of the emphasis is pre-arranged by the producer, but it is the actor who carries it out. In the cinema the master of emphasis is the director. The attention of the audience is attracted and held by the actor only so far as the director permits and always within the wider pattern of emphasis which the director himself imposes by editing—a form of emphatic behaviour in which acting plays no part.

Trained actors, that is, human beings practised in character creation and in its expression, are not necessary in the cinema, certainly not in the way that they are necessary in the theatre. The fact that a film is shot in fragments, and that if necessary these fragments can be broken up into even smaller fragments, the fact that the film director is

present at the performance as well as at rehearsals and that during a silent shot he can even shout instructions at you while you are acting, means that if necessary the business of character creation and development can be taken over by him and communicated to the performer piece-meal.

That is how children act. The character and behaviour of the little boy in *The Fallen Idol* was imagined by Carol Reed and handed out to Bobbie Henrey a little at a time. Similarly the young Pip in *Great Expectations* was the creation of David Lean, handed out in small pieces to a clever child actor, Anthony Wager. The same is true of dogs. The director imagines the necessary pieces of dog-behaviour, describes them to the dog's trainer and the trainer gets the dog to reproduce them.

It may be argued that anybody can be made to act on these terms. And why not? As long as *someone* present can describe how the character should behave, it doesn't matter. The studious character-building side of every actor supplies his expressive creative side with such information in any case. Why should not a studious character-building intelligence *outside* his own supply such information to a performer who cannot invent it for himself, but who can use it when it is invented for him? This is only what we call the ability to "take direction" and is almost as common in the theatre as it is in the cinema. It is only the complete function of acting divided between two people.

Even when a film is performed by highly skilled actors, director-emphasis is still its overriding feature. Indeed, the actor depends upon such emphasis to complete his own performance. However wonderful the acting, it can be made or marred by the way the director takes the camera and microphone in search of it and by what happens to it after it reaches the cutting room. In the theatre you spend anything from four to ten weeks before you and your colleagues find the true rhythm and sweep of your own rôles and of the *whole* play. In the cinema the director spends just as many weeks finding the rhythm of the whole film and imposing it upon a mass of film footage which includes the performances of all the actors.

The peculiar nature of film making even allows the director to add fresh and subtle acting touches undreamed of during actual performances.

A celebrated British director, who must be nameless, was once cutting a film in which an up-and-coming female star had the chief part and was at his wits' end to find a few feet in which the young lady looked suitably delighted at seeing her fiancé walk into the room after having been reported dead. Eventually he found a short end immediately following the clappers, in which the actress responded with complete abandon to the shout "Tea up!" The director assured me that this particular

shot was the making of her performance and that it helped to set her feet on the high road to fame.

In general, film acting may be said to be *included* in stage acting. A competent stage actor has only to go to the film studio with a completely open mind and be prepared to make radical adjustments in what he is already used to doing, in order to become a competent film actor.

Until they become a habit all these adjustments, measuring the gear changes, keeping a grip on continuity and so on, can be communicated by the director, just as he can communicate acting itself to people who have never acted in their lives before. But a film actor who has never worked in the theatre cannot suddenly take up stage acting because it depends upon a technique of emphasis, and the ability to sustain it over long periods, which together require many years of hard training. It is one thing to ask a stage actor to give far less than he is used to giving in the theatre, but quite another to ask a film actor to give far more than he is used to giving in front of the camera, when that far more isn't there to give and can only be put there by long and intense cultivation.

Film acting calls for powers of concentration, accuracy and truthfulness rarely if ever demanded of the stage actor, who cannot avoid slackening or coarsening or adulterating some part of his work in the nightly embrace of the audience.

The trouble is that stage acting, like other forms of embracing, is extremely enjoyable, far more "matey" and "cosy" than film acting, which is like embracing by letter or by telephone.

A theatrical performance is an act of fellowship in which the interchange of warmth between stage and auditorium gives everyone present a feeling of immense comfort and well-being. What is happening on the stage is happening specially for us and we are making a special contribution to it. There have been performances before and there will be many after, but this particular one will never happen again.

In the cinema both actor and audience are denied this refreshing act of fellowship. The performance is not being given here and now at all, it was given months or even years ago. Far from being influenced by our presence, the very same film is probably being screened in hundreds of cinemas all over the country. The cinema in which we are seeing it may be full, but if it were empty it wouldn't make a bit of difference. The performance would be precisely the same performance.

But this loneliness of film acting, the fact that it is sold in tins and the fact that the audience has no influence on it, must not beguile the actor into the belief that it is only a subsidiary branch of his art. On the contrary, it will call forth his very highest powers.

# THEATRE BOOKSHELF

## Lost Leader

**Harley Granville Barker**, by C. B. Purdom.  
*Rockliff, 30s.*

To those of us who knew and worked with Harley Granville Barker, the appearance of this biography is a welcome sign that his influence is sufficiently alive to-day to stir the imagination and stimulate the industry of the scholar. I, for one, am deeply grateful to Mr. Purdom because this side idolatory I worshipped Barker as the embodiment of the spirit that is needed to make the theatre the refreshment, the recreation in its true sense, that it is meant to be. My admiration for and my acceptance of Granville Barker's mission for the betterment of the theatre were absolute and unquestioning. So much so, that my more ribald and sacrilegious friends used to declare that in the unlikely event of my going to heaven, I should be found with a harp singing "Harley! Harley! Harley!"

Through all human beings there runs a chord that responds to Truth. It was truth in the theatre that Harley Granville Barker made it his mission to pursue. His success with his audiences, and the enduring memory of it, is proof positive of how often he succeeded in achieving it.

Wisely Mr. Purdom has divided his book into four parts: (I) The Actor; (II) The Producer; (III) Visit to America and the First World War; and (IV) The Writer. Parts I, II and IV form what Barker had always said should be the pattern of his working life. To those who condemned his withdrawal from active leadership his friends would exclaim "But that is exactly what he always meant to do." The fact that no one was able to accept his withdrawal with equanimity is the measure of the high hopes he had aroused. No one complains if the ordinary man accomplishes what he had set himself to do and departs; but let the extraordinary man do so, and we mourn the tragedy of the greater might-have-been.

Harley Granville Barker should have been the first director of England's National Theatre. That the English as a race had not moved sufficiently fast to have the Theatre built in his lifetime is England's tragedy, not his. Throughout this book there are proofs of the really gruelling work that William Archer and Granville Barker put in for the establishment of a National Theatre and the constant pressure that they brought to bear on those in high office at the time. It is a fact that people get the government they deserve, and in the same way people get the theatre they deserve.

Mr. Purdom says in his epilogue: "That there was greatness in Barker is suggested by

the fact that he has become a legend so soon after his death. The impression of his personality was such that his memory is held in devotion by everyone, almost without exception, who was brought into touch with him and the revolution in the theatre of which he was the figure-head has put him in a place unchallenged by any other theatrical figure of the century in this country. The theatre that is to come will be built by those who owe their inspiration to him." What Mr. Purdom has written could not have been better expressed. Those who were lucky enough to work under Barker will tell you that whatever he touched had distinction. This is a quality that endures, and in due course Barker's plays and prefaces will come into their own because of it.

Even at the height of his success when, as John Masefield wrote, "People look upon you as a god," there were very many of his fellow actors and actresses who thought his distinction a tiresome result of his intellect. Intelligence is not regarded as a particularly commendable quality in an actor or actress. It is frequently replaced by an instinct that enables its possessor to do in a flash what the intellect takes hours to work out. In Barker's case I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say of him that he was a divinely inspired intellectual. All inspiration, if it is to endure, and if others are to understand and enjoy it, must be fixed by technique. Barker was, as an actor, able to make technique look like inspiration; as a producer, to teach others how to do so, and as a writer of Shakespearian prefaces to set down for future generations the way it could be done. Each of these three phases of his service to the theatre, actor, producer and writer lasted almost exactly ten years, and to each he devoted himself with the tireless energy of the lover. Even when, in his third phase of writer he returned to his second and produced Shakespeare or one of his own plays, his absorption in the task in hand seemed to feed his energies and never exhaust them.

Part III (Visit to America and the First World War) deals with perfect discretion and complete impartiality with the break-up of his marriage to Lillah McCarthy and their subsequent second marriages. My own feeling about the private lives of public men and women is that they are not and should not be made public property, but I suppose that when historians of the theatre deal with the beginnings of the twentieth century a glimpse must be afforded into the private lives of these particular people; if it must, then Mr. Purdom is to be congratulated on his method of doing it.

Nor is this the only thing in the book for which he is to be congratulated. His epilogue, the comprehensive list of Barker's plays and writings, and the index at the end are all admirable; and all through the book the fascinating glimpses given in illustrations and letterpress of the young beginnings of Barker and the friends whose names have since become household words are a continual joy. My advice is—get the book.

NICHOLAS HANNEN

## Great Playwrights, Great Player

**James Bridie and His Theatre**, by Winifred Bannister. Rockliff. 25s. **Sybil Thorndike**, by J. C. Trewin. Rockliff. 12s. 6d. **Theatrical Companion to Maugham**, by Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson. Rockliff. 42s.

Mrs. Bannister's book on Bridie is not, and does not pretend to be, a complete or definitive biography. A quarter of it is a biographical sketch, and the remaining three-quarters is a description and an examination of the plays. Yet the gnome who was James Bridie, eager and inscrutable, is clearly before the mind's eye all the time one reads this excellent book. It is like a Bridie play, both satisfying and dissatisfying, at once complete and incomplete, at the same time good and bad, never untrue and yet never the whole truth.

The subject's wife, Mrs. Mavor, may one day—if she has the impetus to write—give us a satisfactory and revealing book on Dr. Osborne Henry Mavor who called himself "James Bridie" when he wrote plays for the Scottish-English theatre. It would seem that no one else whatsoever really knew him well enough to do so.

In my half-dozen encounters with him I thought him one of the most puzzling men I had ever met. The first encounter was at a small, delightful supper-party in London when I heard Edith Evans challenging him to write her "a larkish play". (The result, ten years later, was *Daphne Laureola*, a masterpiece both for him and for Dame Edith.) The subsequent occasions were at Malvern, at Edinburgh, and at Glasgow, and when I think of him now, it is as he was at one of our last meetings when he told me in great detail the plot of his latest comedy. This account amused him far more than it did me, and in the middle of the recital, while I was secretly thinking how inordinately vain are most Scotsmen, he suddenly stopped and said: "But here I am enjoying my new play far more than you damned critics will ever do!" But there was no bad temper in his rebuke.

Other people emerge from Mrs. Bannister's book far more satisfying and clearly than Bridie does—Dame Edith herself, for example. Like any other good journalist Mrs. Bannister knows when and what to quote, and she reproduces in  *toto*  this vivid extract from *The Art of Adventure* by Mr. Eric Linklater. It is

a description of a civic lunch in Glasgow:—

"Mr. Bridie was required to make a speech. He stood up, fumbled irresolutely with some notes, and put them in his pocket. 'I am not,' he said, 'going to deliver the very good speech which I had prepared. With Miss Evans in our company, all other speeches are irrelevant and I have no interest in them. I shall speak about Miss Evans.' And he spoke so aptly, with such judgment, eloquence and so nice a warmth, that Dame Edith, when he had finished, rose impulsively, and in the noble melody to which she alone can tune the human voice, declared: 'My Lord Provost! I apologise for what is, I cannot deny it, the gravest breach of decorum—for convention and common modesty, both, in the ordinary ways require privacy for a proposal—yet I dare not lose this immediate opportunity but must say now before you all, that if Mr. Bridie's dear wife should ever decide to release him from his present engagement I intend to marry him myself.'"

This is in every sense a happy citation, and it suggests that Mr. Linklater would be the one person besides his wife who might give us a true biography of James Bridie. He does contribute to the book a preface of a single page. But it is a searchlight of a page. It tells us that Mrs. Bannister "does something to expose the strands and intricacies of the riddle, though she does not presume to answer it." It tells us that the quality of sheer goodness in Bridie's character was "tightly knotted with a brilliant cord of indomitable gaiety." It reminds us, moreover, that Bridie, who was no reformer but a man with a fine talent for idleness, nevertheless "undertook a vast and laborious reform of the city of Glasgow, and endowed it with the permanent gaiety of an indigenous theatre." And it finally and adequately reviews the book to which it is a preface: "Her *catalogue raisonné* of the plays will be useful to students of Bridie the dramatist, and her painstaking account of the theatre he established, and what it accomplished, is a necessary reminder of the work he did for the art he loved."

Mr. Trewin's *Sybil Thorndike* is the latest addition to an admirable and cherishable and copiously illustrated series of monographs which has already disposed of Alec Guinness, Edith Evans, and Peggy Ashcroft in that order, and next promises Eric Portman, Emyln Williams, and Paul Rogers. But surely the last is yet but young in deed? Where are Sir John and Sir Laurence and Sir Ralph?

The photographs in the present example include one in which Dame Sybil squints and pulls a face while cavorting in a romp called *Advertising April* (which two dear dead colleagues of mine, Herbert Farjeon and Horace Horsnell, once wrote together to give our prime tragedienne a chance to rollick in pure farce. I cannot believe that Dame Sybil who has been regaling the Antipodes this past

year and more, would have allowed this picture to be perpetuated. But on every other page Mr. Trewin reveals his subject with his usual taste and discernment. He shrewdly both begins and ends by dwelling on the Siddonsian quality of Dame Sybil's Lady Randolph in the revival of Home's *Douglas* at the Edinburgh Festival of 1950; and he rightly calls her creation of Shaw's Saint Joan "one of the overwhelming performances of the half-century." No other Joan since this original has caught the ecstatic dreamer as well as the rough-tongued maid, the saint as well as the warrior, and the Thorndike Joan kneeling at prayer in Rheims Cathedral—rightly reproduced here—will always be the true and complete Joan to incipient fogeys like Mr. Trewin and myself.

In Messrs. Mander and Mitchenson's *Theatrical Companion to Maugham* we have another *catalogue raisonné*—vast, useful, reliable, accurate. "Your industry is as staggering as your accuracy is impressive," writes Mr. Maugham himself to the compilers in an introductory note fifty words long, and once again the introducer provides the perfect review.

Mr. Trewin, in his long introduction to this teeming catalogue, does not sufficiently deplore the fact that Mr. Maugham too summarily gave up writing for the theatre with the failure of *Sheppey* away back in 1933. He forgives him:—"He chose his own time to go, deciding that there was autumn in the air, tiring of the conventions of the drama, and sighing for the liberty of fiction." But we cannot so easily forgive. The loss of any fresh Maugham to the theatre in the last twenty-odd years has been irreparable.

ALAN DENT

## The Chapmans and the Drakes

*These Were Actors* by George D. Ford. Library Publishers, New York. \$5.

This book has a special interest, coming from the pen of a descendant of two distinguished families—Chapmans and Drakes—who carried over the theatrical tradition from England to the United States.

Students may perhaps be warned that the book does not deal with George Chapman, the sixteenth-century actor, playwright and critic.

It opens with a vivid picture of an early eighteenth-century Thomas Chapman who, having taken part in the Blenheim campaign, finds himself without occupation in London: in a barber's shop he by chance attracts the notice of John Rich by his voice and appearance, and is offered the part of the Beggar in Rich's new enterprise *The Beggar's Opera*. From that time onwards he is a regular member of Rich's company, acting many of the great parts and consorting with many of the great actors of the day. He plays second male lead to Garrick, and the climax of his Shakespearean career comes when he acts Jacques to

Peg Woffington's Rosalind. It is thus that he becomes a chief actor in her last tragic scene, when she collapses on the stage after speaking the Epilogue to *As You Like It*. "Tom moved quickly towards her dressing-room, but before he reached the door he felt the body of Mistress Peg Woffington grow heavy and lifeless in his arms."

It is Thomas Chapman's grandson, William Chapman senior, who is the founder of the theatrical family. After thirty-five years at Covent Garden he migrated with his children to America, whither one of his sons had already preceded him, and there started the showboats on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. "The Chapmans' river-boat, christened 'The Theatre', was to be a seasonal occupation. During the warm months the family troupe would play the river towns and during the regular theatrical season perform in the established centres. But the 'playhouse on a raft', forerunner of the elegant showboat, proved so successful that it took the whole year to complete the tour."

William Chapman senior was still playing the Ghost in *Hamlet* at the age of ninety, and it is recorded that on one occasion the ghost convulsed the audience by absent-mindedly making his first entrance wearing spectacles.

The founder of the Drake family, Sam Drake, was a contemporary of William Chapman senior. He started a circuit of theatres while William Chapman was running the showboats. Their grandchildren, Harry Chapman and Julia Drake, married, thus uniting the two families.

These are only the main characters in a story full of minor personalities—a story which covers whole chapters of American history. San Francisco at the time of the gold rush is vividly described, and the civil war breaks into the lives of the two families. It is not a work of research, but it presents in an intimate and attractive fashion the different phases of stage life, and is written in a pleasant narrative form full of racy anecdotes. It is excellently printed and bound by the Haddon Craftsmen, and illustrated with drawings of the old theatres, photographs of the chief personages, and facsimiles of playbills. It ought to serve a very useful function.

F. S. BOAS

## Theatre Annuals

*Theatre 1954-5*, by Ivor Brown. Reinhardt. 18s. *Theatre World Annual No. 6*, by Frances Stephens. Rockliff. 18s.

There are some good photographs in Ivor Brown's new annual and some mild criticisms in Frances Stephens' latest picture book. But by and large, of course, the latter is for the pictorial souvenir public and the former for those who want a more controversial comment on the theatrical twelve-month from mid-1954 to mid-1955. Still nobody (least of all himself) would accuse Ivor Brown of being a highbrow



critic, and lots of production photographs are useful not only as pin-ups. Those who are unwilling to wager 18s. each way would doubtless like to see a merger of the two annuals in future years. The duplication of cast lists would be eliminated for one thing, and the comments and pictures would usefully complement each other.

The very varied subject-matter of these two books cannot be discussed in a short notice. Those who want their own theatre-going recollections revived and stimulated will enjoy them both. Those who want reliable reference books, and expect an annual survey to be comprehensive, consistent and consultable, may find a few minor details that might be remedied in other years. On what sort of system, if any, does Miss Stephens hand out bouquets to all three principals in Anouilh's *Time Remembered* and say nothing about the performances of Dorothy Tutin, Donald Pleasence, or of anyone else for that matter, in Anouilh's *The Lark*? Why doesn't Ivor Brown have something to say about the very interesting revival of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*; why does he omit the name of the translator of this new version; why doesn't he define the limited scope of his index, and why doesn't he facilitate reference to his reviews by adding the play titles to the captions in the Contents List? As it is they are crossword clues: "The Maid's Tragedy," for instance, here signifies a review of *St. Joan* and *The Lark*. Substantially, however, Ivor Brown is well up to his old form.

ROY WALKER

## Ballet—Past and Present

**Modern Ballet Design**, by Richard Buckle. A. & C. Black. 30s. **In Search of Diaghilev**, by Richard Buckle. Sidgwick & Jackson. 30s. **The Sadler's Wells Ballet**, by Mary Clarke. A. & C. Black. 21s. **Ballets Past & Present**, by Cyril Beaumont. Putnam. 21s.

No student of the theatre can afford nowadays to neglect the ballet. Formerly it was not so, but Diaghilev changed all that. The influence ballet has had on contemporary staging is immense, and a man such as Bérard designed the décor for a play or a ballet with equal success, *La Folle de Chaillet* for Jouvet or *Les Forains* for Petit. His last work for the stage, *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, is rightly included in Richard Buckle's *Modern Ballet Design*, reminding us that the distinctions between plays and ballets, poetry and prose, mime and acrobatics are arbitrary and that a Molière play can be all of these when Barrault is playing the agile Scapin, in a set designed to show off his antics. Perhaps it is unfair to single out Bérard, great as he was, for so much attention, for the book has 207 illustrations by thirty-eight designers, not one of whom is negligible, while the author neatly sums up the work of the artist in question or the flavour of the ballet or its import with just appreciation.

*In Search of Diaghilev* is another sort of book altogether, though here again the author with his practised eye for layout has provided page upon page of artists' drawings, portraits, costume designs, settings, sketches and caricatures of the protagonists of the Diaghilev enterprise, to delight and enthrall the reader. The book is far more than a record of the exhibition assembled by Mr. Buckle, it is a fascinating account of his search for material and of the interesting people he met. We hurry from the cloistered seclusion of the Paris flat of Goncharova and Larionov to the glare of publicity of a Riviera Film Festival with Cocteau in an "exotic, fringed, tartan, rug-like jacket" in the centre of the picture. Picasso eludes him till there is a bull-fight at Nîmes; only a bull-fight can bring Picasso out from his closely-guarded villa into the world arena. And so on to the triumph of the Exhibition, first in Edinburgh and then in London.

Mary Clarke's well-documented *Sadler's Wells Ballet* traces the English contribution to ballet from its modest beginnings. There are touching anecdotes on almost every page—of how Madame Lopokova danced at the Wells and gave her salary to the dancers, who gave it to the Sadler's Wells Fund; of how Gustav Holst paid (secretly) for one extra orchestral rehearsal for *Job*; of how Mrs. Henderson (of the Windmill Theatre) lost £30,000 on financing a ballet tour after being warned by Lilian Baylis, "You will do much good for British Ballet—but you will lose a fortune."

In *Ballets Past & Present*, Mr. Beaumont continues his invaluable work of recording all that is worth recording in 19th and 20th century ballet. It is in fact the 3rd supplement to his magnum opus, *The Complete Book of Ballets*, which appeared in 1938. Helpmann and Cranko get into this volume and so do Pia and Pino Mlakars, whose folk-ballet *The Devil in the Village*, danced by the Yugoslav National Ballet was one of the most interesting seen in London in 1955.

JANET LEEPER

## Kathleen Ferrier

**The Life of Kathleen Ferrier**, by Winifred Ferrier. Hamish Hamilton. 15s.

This book tells the story of a young Lancashire girl who became the most famous English singer of our generation. Kathleen Ferrier was born in 1912 in humble circumstances. At fourteen she was obliged to leave school to work as a girl-probationer in Blackburn Post Office. After four years of this drudgery, she was promoted to be a telephonist at 19s. a week. There she stayed for a further five years, until she married a bank official in a small Cumberland town and eked out her husband's salary by giving piano lessons.

Not a very promising start to an artistic career! Kathleen was twenty-five before she earned her first fee—the sum of one guinea



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for singing at a local Harvest Festival. But during those eleven years since leaving school she had constantly practised music as an amateur. At first as a pianist and accompanist and later as a singer, she took part in local charity concerts and musical evenings: she sang with choirs; she competed at amateur festivals. Long years of frustration did not discourage her. She was preparing herself, however obscurely, for the greatness that was to come. In 1941, when she was twenty-nine, she took the decisive step of becoming a professional singer.

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Her life was tragically short. She died when she was forty-one. Let us be grateful that her memory is kept alive in the records that exist of her incomparable singing and in this attractive and inspiring biography by her sister Winifred Ferrier.

ERIC CROZIER

## The Puppet Theatre

**The History of The English Puppet Theatre**, by George Speaight. Harrap. 25s.  
**Harlequin's Revenge**, by Margaret Stanley-Wrench. Centaur Press. 6s.

A sound history of our puppet theatre has long been overdue. George Speaight has not let us down, and has produced a book that will fascinate not only puppet fans but all lovers of the theatre, and should be on the shelves of every theatrical library. For in tracing the excitingly chequered history of puppets from the beginnings of European civilisation to the present day—bringing to light a great deal of new research on the subject—he manages with the help of racy anecdotes of the fairgrounds and the show places of the popular theatre, and the wits and wags of fashionable marionette theatres, tales of vagabonds, mountebanks, artists and actors, to give us a series of vivid pictures of the people of England through the centuries.

The central theme of the book becomes the history of Punchinello, and though Speaight is sadly silent about the exact date when this character became a puppet, his ancestry is traced back through the puppet theatres of Greece and Rome, through the *Commedia dell'Arte* to his arrival in this country with Italian showmen in 1662, where, intermarrying with his English cousins descended from puppet Mystery plays he became the famous English Punch. There is a clear case, it is claimed, for the purely English origin of the Punch and Judy play, and Speaight

suggests that the English Punch show in its turn may have travelled overseas and influenced the puppet theatres of Europe. Indeed at one period the English puppet theatre with its comic operas and grand spectacles was considered the finest and most advanced in the world, and it is sad that in our present time it has in the main degenerated, let us hope temporarily, into a *divertissement* for children.

While in no way impairing the historical and sociological value of the book I believe Speaight's approach to the artistic side of puppetry is fundamentally wrong (or muddled, for he does at times seem to contradict himself). He refers to the "impersonal theatre" and describes the puppet as the "complete mask", the "complement rather than the rival" of the actor, saying that it is for the audience to endow the puppet with life. Any showman will tell him, however, that the good manipulator is first and foremost an actor. He lives himself and rouses his audience through his puppets, which are merely his tools of trade, the hamper and make-up box with which he gives form to his ideas. Without the actor's creative fire no one can bring life to a puppet, however skilled at string pulling.

Having written an enthusiastic preface to Miss Stanley-Wrench's book of four puppet plays this perhaps is not the place for me to say more than that here are some intelligent, poetic and imaginative pieces which may supply something that Speaight feels is lacking in modern puppetry.

JAN RUSSELL

## Practical Handbooks

**Drama Festivals and Adjudications**, by Christopher Ede. Jenkins. 5s. **Drama in Schools**, by E. J. Burton. Jenkins. 5s. **Let's Do Some Acting**, by Anthony Parker. Bodley Head. 5s. **Make-up for Amateurs**, by Callum Mill. Albyn Press. 5s. **The Art of Make-up**, by Serge Strenkovsky. Muller. 22s. 6d.

A recent publisher's announcement gives figures for 1955 showing an increase in technical books and a decrease in fiction. This at least suggests activity against "escapism". The island race perhaps has not been doped into complete inertia by the art of moving photographs on a flickery screen in the corner of the room.

But the "practical handbook" is a very difficult thing to write, especially when the author is dealing with one of the arts; and although there is much to praise and little to criticise in the present collection, one is continually aware of a kind of grinding thoroughness that sets up vibrations in favour of the bosomy, green-fingered producer who gets marvellous results with all the wrong methods, and actors who keep sticks of dirty make-up in cigarette tins. The "trouble-shooting" style is fine so long as it creates a setting for, and does not replace, the creative spirit. A great

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deal of responsibility rests with the reader; but I wish the present authors had been a little less staid and a bit more inflammatory.

Mr. Ede deals most thoroughly with a side of the amateur theatre that is often and exasperatingly mismanaged. No excuse now for incompetence. Mr. Burton's book is likewise brisk, competent, and free from cant. I find myself a little more critical of Mr. Parker's book, though its literary style is well suited to young readers. Two examples from far too many: among the first of his precepts to the young producer, printed in red capitals, we find: **THE PRODUCER MUST BE OBEYED**. Again, Mr. Parker advocates that the producer must decide on moves and write them down in the margin of the book of the play before rehearsals begin. Those who see nothing wrong in these precepts may confidently buy the book for confirmation of their methods.

Mr. Mill's book on make-up is stodgily written. With diagrams of skulls and colour-charts it is a little more than a manual and less than—well, less than Mr. Strenkovsky's book which one can only call "a mastery survey". If you like to be told that "The ears (of the normal European Adult Man in a state of Repose) are on approximately the same level as the nose and protrude a little from the head"; that "Somnolent Indifference is manifested by more or less relaxation of the *Levatori Palpebrarum superiorem* muscles . . ."; and that "unfortunately many worshippers of Melpomene, Thalia, and Terpsichore are not acquainted with even the elementary rules of make-up"; if you like charts and diagrams galore and hints on chiaroscuro and optical illusions, you'll be delighted with every page of this gruelling book and think nothing of its price.

JOHN ALLEN

## Australian Plays

**Men Without Wives, and other plays**, by H. Drake-Brockman. Angus & Robertson. 16s.

These plays are the work of an author who possesses a flair for the dramatic situation and who develops her theme by means of authentic, clearly defined characters seen against a background observed in scrupulous detail. It may well be that the novelty of the terrain in each case will be one of the first attractions to students of drama who are unacquainted with Australia. For Mrs. Drake-Brockman has chosen as her settings the rugged cattle country of the Northern Territory (*Men Without Wives*), the mining town of Kalgoorlie with its Golden Mile (*Hot Gold*), and the pearl fishing industry of north Australia as viewed respectively from the bar of a public house (*The Blister*) and from the verandah of a bishop's bungalow (*Dampier's Ghost*), all of which are in a literary sense largely unexplored territory.

*Men Without Wives* (three acts) poses the

problem of life in the wide lands of the tropic north, so hard on white women lacking the ordinary comforts of civilisation, and where white men, cut off from normal domesticity, so easily go "native" or take to drink. Its central character is Ma Bates with her stoicism, her all-embracing kindness, her sharp tongue and mannish ways. She has endured for twenty years the heat, the flies, the loneliness, the privations and the recurrent wet season. She is a true heroine. *The Blister* (one act) deals with a gently-bred expatriate from the Shires, longing to go back, and with the good-hearted barmaid who doubts her fitness to accompany him. *Hot Gold* (three acts) and *Dampier's Ghost* (one act) are lively comedies. All four plays have been successfully produced in Australia and the two one-acters have proved themselves as Drama Festival entries.

BEATRICE TILDESLEY

### Long Plays

**Italian Love Story**, by Colin Morris. English Theatre Guild, 5s. 7 m., 5 w., 2 sets. This story of war-torn Italy in 1943, with peasants, patricians, partisans, British officers and ENSA artists, first presented at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton in 1946, is a full-blooded and exciting play in which scenes of violence are tempered with the right admixture of comedy. Every one of the varied characters has been carefully studied (maybe at first hand) with the result that the dialogue has great verve and vitality.

**Holiday for Simon**, by Alfred Shaughnessy. French, 4s. 3 m., 3 w., 1 set. Produced on B.B.C. Television in June 1955, this is an unusual treatment of a common situation. Six people are thrown together in a house on the Riviera and there is every prospect that the position will develop into the usual story of sexual attraction and intrigue. But in Act 3 the play is given an unexpected turn; the kindling fires die down calmly, they are not rudely stamped out to leave six frustrated lives.

**Happy Landings**, by Patrick Gargill and Jack Beale. French, 4s. 5 m., 3 w., 1 set. Produced at the Richmond Theatre, Surrey, in September 1954, this is a farcical comedy having no pretensions to drama. It is undoubtedly entertaining to those who demand a laugh on every line. What plot there is, is very contrived—a sort of Box and Cox affair on a houseboat.

**The Age of Indiscretion**, by Noel Berryman. French, 4s. 3 m., 4 w., 1 set. Presented at the "Q" Theatre in November 1954, it has a well constructed plot and the characterisation is good. The title is no indication of the theme. It might well have been, "It's Nearly Too Late To Mend". The play shows a self-centred and embittered woman whose hateful tyranny alienates the affection of her husband and daughter, both people of good will. Such women do exist, but the author demands too much when he asks us to accept from her at

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INCLUDES EXPERIENCED PRO-  
DUCERS AND LECTURERS WHO  
ARE AVAILABLE FOR ENGAGEMENTS

*Write to the Hon. Secretary:*

**Guild of Drama Adjudicators**  
**26 Bedford Square, London, W.C.1**

the end of the play four lines of grudging regret.

**The Gentle Arm**, by John Alldridge. French. 4s. 6 m., 10 w., 1 set. Presented by the Withington Players, Manchester, in December 1954. The Charge Room of a provincial Police Station would appear to be an unlikely background to comedy, but here, to quote one character, is "a Provincial Palace of Varieties presenting 'Life on the Scamy Side' with an all-star bill. Never a dull moment. Romance, Heartbreak, Tears. This show's got everything." The gentle arm is, of course, the policewomen.

**The Evergreens**, by Margaret Gibbs. French. 4s. 3 m., 5 w., 1 set., is a well-constructed and pleasing little domestic comedy with no loose ends. The characters are all interesting and readily come to life, providing good material without making too great demands of the players. The dialogue is finished and smooth.

**A Run For His Money**, by John Winchester. Leonard's Plays, 3s. 6d. 4 m., 5 w., 1 set. A comedy of the hilarious type centering round (1) an incorrigible practical joker of 65, (2) a lively, irresponsible old lady addicted to the bottle, (3) an outrageously overdrawn wisecracking housekeeper. The serious characters who are responsible for maintaining the plot tend to become secondary to the farcical element.

**Casson's Boy**, by Alida L. Richardson. Leonard's Plays, 3s. 6d. 8 w., 1 set. A play for women, broadcast by the B.B.C. in *Wednesday Matinee* on September 21st, 1955, has an interesting theme and a well devised plot. Characters are well-drawn and convincing.

A. H. WHARRIER

## One-Act Plays

**The Courtship of Susan Bell**. Harold Simpson. French. 1s. 6d. 2 m., 3 f. A dramatisation of a story by Anthony Trollope, set in America. Costume 1880.

**Missing From Home**. Philip Johnson. French. 1s. 6d. 2 m., 4 f. The whereabouts of a husband, missing for twenty-five years, are revealed in a mysterious mental flashback.

**The Voices**. T. B. Morris. French. 1s. 6d. 1 m., 5 f., 2 girls. Joan of Arc leaves her family to begin her great mission. Costume 1428.

**The Right Person**. Philip Mackie. French. 1s. 6d. 2 m., 1 f. A drama of the Resistance movement—12 years afterwards. First performed on television.

**The Silent Enemy**. Howard Agg. French. 1s. 6d. 6 f. The breaking of an evil spell which surrounds an old mill house and its womenfolk.

**The Waters of Lethe**. Frank Sladen-Smith. Garnet Miller. 2s. 6d. 4 m., 6 f. A strange assortment of characters meet in hell seeking forgetfulness of their pasts. Published separately for the first time.

**Culprit of the Shadows**. Michael J. Murphy. Carter, Belfast. 1s. 9d. 3 m., 2 f. A kitchen comedy in the rich Ulster idiom.

**Miss Pringle Plays Portia.** Victor Maddern and Lynne Reid Banks. Deane, 1s. 6d. 4 m., 5 w., supers. Leading lady of the local amateurs solves the problem of the disputed ownership of the playing fields.

**The Finger on the Heart.** Gwenyth Jones. French, 1s. 6d. 3 m., 4 f., 1 child. The domestic scene behind the raising of Naomi's child from the dead. Biblical costume.

**Bank Holiday.** James Parish. French, 1s. 1 m., 1 f. A dramatic and poignant playlet requiring a first-rate actress.

**Tutankhamon, Son of Ra.** T. B. Morris. French, 1s. 6d. 5 or 7 m., 6 f. Stage adaptation of a radio play, recalling a fascinating period of Egyptian history. Costumes, modern and ancient Egyptian.

**The Hardened Sinner.** Barbara Couper. French, 1s. 6d. 8 f. A slight case of theft at a girls' school.

**Royal Widow.** Norman Holland. French, 1s. 6d. 6 f. An episode from the life of Queen Victoria. Costume 1865.

**Instruments of Darkness.** Margaret Wood. French, 1s. 6d. 5 m., 3 w., supers. Premonitions of evil grip the servants hall at the castle of the Macbeths as Duncan makes his fateful visit. Costume.

**George Comes Home.** Ted Willis. French, 1s. 6d. 7 or 9 f. A young married soldier returns after four years abroad. Comedy and pathos are vividly extracted from a familiar situation set against a working-class background.

**Peril at the Post Office.** Stuart Ready. Deane, 1s. 6d. 7 f. The arrival of a cryptic telegram at the village post office gives rise to a series of farcical situations.

**Anniversary Day.** Sam Bate. Deane, 1s. 6d. 5 f. How two old ladies preserve the memory of their first and only loves. Costume 1904.

**This Angel Business.** Ivy A. Ireland. N.U.T.G., 1s. 6d. 6 f. Preparations for the local pageant's Angel of Peace—who really materialises.

**Midsummer Love,** by James Lansdale Hodson. French, 1s. 6d. How middle-aged members of a dramatic society get engaged—and stay engaged. 1 m., 2 f.

**Mix-Up-Atosis,** by Phoebe Rees. Deane, 1s. 6d. Plans for a W.I. Bring-and-Buy Sale with livestock complications. 6 f.

**Coffee for One,** by Jack Last. Deane, 1s. 6d. A macabre comedy of weed killer in the morning coffee. 6 f.

**Night Crossing,** by Brenda Rattray. English Theatre Guild. 1s. 6d. Comedy on the deck of a cross-Channel steamer. 7 f.

**The Laboratory,** by David Campton. Garnet Miller, 2s. 6d. A farce involving poisons and love potions set in an apothecary's cellar in Renaissance Italy. 2 m., 3 f.

**Doctor Death,** by C. C. Allinson. I.O.A.P.T. 2s. 4d. Lady doctors and their patients in a drama of love and hatred. 5 f.

**Love, Poetry and Civil Service,** by Alexander Blok. 1s. 6d. Comedy translated

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Samuel French Limited are pleased to announce the dates of release for production by amateur companies of the undermentioned plays. The acting editions are now available at 5s. 4d. per copy post paid.

SEAGULLS OVER SORRENTO. A play in three acts by Hugh Hastings. One interior scene. 9 males. (Available January 1st.)

SABRINA FAIR. A Romantic comedy in two acts by Samuel Taylor. One exterior scene. 7 males, 7 females. (Available February 1st.)

MISERY ME. A comedy of Woe in three acts by Denis Cannan. 5 males, 2 females. One interior scene. (Available February 1st.)

DEAR CHARLES. A comedy in three acts by Alan Melville, adapted from *Les Enfants d'Edouard* by Marc-Gilbert Sauvajon and Frederick Jackson. One interior scene. 7 males, 5 females. (Available February 8th.)

UNCERTAIN JOY. A play in three acts by Charlotte Hastings. One interior scene. 5 males, 4 females. (Available March 1st.)

SERIOUS CHARGE. A drama in three acts by Philip King. Two interior scenes. 5 males, 4 females. (Available March 1st.)

THE SLEEPING PRINCE. An occasional Fairy Tale in two acts by Terence Rattigan. One interior scene. 7 males, 6 females. (Available February 1st.)

THE GUIDE TO SELECTING PLAYS, giving a synopsis of French's three-act plays, is now published separately and a copy will be sent without charge and post paid on receipt of application.

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from the Russian and published by F. O'Dempsey. First performed in 1906 in St. Petersburg. 3 m. and crowd.

**The Paying Guest**, by Peter Assinder. Kenyon House Press, 1s. 6d. 4 f. Drama of murder and mystery in a country cottage.

**In the Soup**, by Simon Garrett. Kenyon, 1s. 6d. 7 f. Comedy-thriller of a poisoning that didn't quite take place.

**Surprise Packet**, by Nora Clare. Kenyon, 1s. 6d. 5 f. Exciting comedy in wayside café.

**New Plays Quarterly No. 29**. Subscription.

Includes: *The Thistle in Donkey Field*, by Richard Tydeman. A verse fantasy calling for imaginative approach in production. 5 m., 3 f.

*The Man Who Invented Haggis*, by Rex Knight and Yvonne Langley. A farcical comedy. Costume and some Scots dialect. 4 m., 3 f.

*The Spirit and the Truth*, by Frank New. A religious play set in the house of Pontius Pilate at the time of the Crucifixion. 2 m., 3 f.

*The Anagram*, by Conrad Carter. Another of Mrs. Martyn's moments. 5 f.

DONALD FITZJOHN

## Shorter Notices

**BLACKIE & SON: The Puritaine** (with note), *Anon* (1607). 6s. **The Housemaster** (with note), by Ian Hay. 6s. 6d. **The Pacificists**, by Henry Arthur Jones. 5s. 6d.

**COUNTRYGOER BOOKS: The Collected Plays of L. du Garde Peach**. 3-act, 3 vols. 1-act, 1 vol. 15s. each.

**ENGLISH SPEAKING BOARD: Speech in Practice**, by Christabel Burniston (*Second Printing*). 2s. 6d. A textbook for speech training lessons, written in non-technical language.

**FRENCH: 3-Act Plays: Meet a Body**, by Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat. **Seagulls Over Sorrento**, by Hugh Hastings. **The Diary of a Nobody**, by George & Weedon Grossmith. **Sabrina Fair**, by Samuel Taylor. **Uncertain Joy**, by Charlotte Hastings. **Misery Me**, by Denis Cannan. 5s. each.

**INTERNATIONAL ONE-ACT PLAY THEATRE: Y Gyffes Gaffael**, by Nora Ratcliff. **Ei Phethau Mewn Trefn**, by Mada Gage Bolton. Both in Welsh (trans. Robert Stephen). 2s. 4d. each.

**METHUEN: Tiger at the Gates**, by Jean Giraudoux, trans. Christopher Fry. 8s. 6d. **Julius Caesar**, ed. T. S. Dorsch (*Arden Shakespeare*). 15s. **Edward II**, by Christopher Marlowe, ed. H. B. Charlton and R. D. Waller. 18s.

## Index

DRAMA has recently published a Subject Index to the Articles in the New Series from Summer 1946 to Winter 1954. The Index can be obtained for 1s. 6d. (post free) from DRAMA, 9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1, and should prove invaluable to the many readers who preserve their copies of the magazine.

Commencing with 1955, an Index will be included in each Winter issue, covering articles for the year then current.

## CORRESPONDENCE

Sir,

I believe I am not the only producer of school drama to have found very few plays that are both good and practicable for children to act. Certainly, every expert I have heard talking upon school drama would seem to think so too—to such an extent, in one or two cases, that one wonders whether they really approve of children acting any scripted play at all. Very possibly this is undesirable for the young child. The fact remains, however, that parents (and therefore headmasters) expect occasional dramatic entertainment, at least from some of the older children: and this lack of satisfactory material is most frustrating to anyone who has seen the worth of acting a good play, both to the children performing it and to their audiences—or, conversely, the crime committed by foisting upon child-actors material fifth-rate in itself, or good but far beyond their powers.

There are indeed many plays specially written for children; but, of the many I have read, I have found scarcely one which I thought suitable, at any rate for the boys of 11–13 from whom I have to cast—incidentally the most natural of all child age-ranges for acting. In one way or another the authors of such plays far too often defeat their own object. For instance, they seem quite unaware that although a child lives much in a world of make-believe, he sees himself in that world as a genuine grown-up, no less than as a spaceman or gangster. The moral is obvious: write as you would for adult actors, simply allowing for the fact (where necessary) that the parts you create will be played by children. They are far more discriminating than might be thought, and very quick to sense whether character and situation have been drawn sincerely, or have merely been “written down” to their supposed level.

Improving the occasion also damns a children's play from the start. A religious theme, based upon history rather than doctrine, might just possibly be suitable; but any “spiritual uplift” propaganda, however heavily disguised, would certainly be detected and probably resented. On the other hand, there is no need to fight shy of serious themes and realistic treatment. Humour and excitement are always welcome, but they are rarely enough by themselves to stimulate the full powers of a child's often considerable acting ability. Boy or girl characters should be avoided as far as possible. It needs an extremely skilled little actor to play the part of a child—especially against other children playing adult parts.

My purpose in writing this letter is to urge the B.D.L. to take any steps which offer the hope of increasing that number.

Brambletye,

E. D. GLANFIELD

East Grinstead, Sussex.

# BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NEWS

## "Picture Post" and the National Festival

As a means of presenting to its readers the range and importance of amateur drama in Britain, *Picture Post* has offered to associate itself with the National Festival of Community Drama, 1956. The B.D.L. Executive has decided to accept this offer on behalf of the Council. It will provide national publicity, over the whole period of Stage Two of the Festival, in a weekly publication of high standing, and in addition a series of generous Awards will be made to assist companies reaching the later rounds.

From early March, when teams have been chosen for Divisional Finals, *Picture Post* will feature each week one or more such companies chosen to show the variety of plays and players in different parts of the country. These features will be written and photographed by *Picture Post* staff.

Each company appearing in a Divisional Final will receive a Certificate of Merit and a *Picture Post* voucher for £10 towards its expenses. The Award for the Area Finalists will carry £20. In the National Final *Picture Post* will make an Award of £25 to each of the three English teams appearing on the afternoon of June 16th, and to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish teams appearing in the evening.

We believe that this association will be of much value to our members in the Festival, and through them to the amateur drama movement.

## Theatre Week 1956

Most members, we know, will be relieved that Theatre Week has gone back to Whitsuntide. The dates are May 18th-26th, the place Royal Leamington Spa. This beautiful town is also a good theatre centre: we have only nine miles to go to Stratford-on-Avon (two visits, May 19th and 25th), we have the Loft Little Theatre on the spot and the Talisman five miles away; two of the best repertory companies in England, and several other Little Theatres are within easy reach. The Conference will last a full day (May 19th), and a new vigour is already showing itself in the resolutions framed by member societies.

## New Year's Honours

We felicitate Miss Gwynneth Thurburn, who succeeded Elsie Fogerty as Principal of the Central School of Speech and Drama, on being created O.B.E. Miss Thurburn has long been a member of our Council. We are happy also that Lord Kilmaine, the Secretary of the Pilgrim Trust, to the wise generosity of whose giving we with so many others are indebted, has been created C.B.E.

## Library Chairman

Dr. F. S. Boas, O.B.E., at ninety-three is represented in this issue by a review in his best style. In welcoming this, we are very sorry to have to report that he can no longer undertake the journey to central London for meetings of the Library Committee, which has sat under his Chairmanship for thirty-one years. He has had a great share in the creation of this unique Library and we shall be always in his debt.

Our sadness is tempered by the pleasure of being able to arrange for the succession of his son, Mr. Guy Boas is Headmaster of the Sloane School, Chelsea, and well known for his Shakespearean productions there. He is Librarian of the Garrick Club, and is already a member of our Council.

## Junior Drama League

Most of the 132 members of the new League crowded into 10 Fitzroy Square on December 29th for the "opening" by Bernard Braden. He simply answered questions; but "Question-Time with Braden" was packed with wisdom expressed in an informal and friendly way.

J.D.L. can take a few more members, but only a few, for the space at Fitzroy Square limits numbers at its activities. One of the most popular at Christmas was the visit, by invitation of Mr. John Fernald (whose daughter is a J.D.L. member) to a dress rehearsal in the Vanbrugh Theatre at the R.A.D.A. of *She Stoops to Conquer*. The model theatre specially made by Mr. Christopher Ede has been in constant use, and so has the junior members' library.

The young members are not only enthusiasts: they know a lot about the theatre past and present. They show sound critical judgment, and they want to work on the more difficult things, such as Shakespeare and theatre history. At the final session of the Christmas holidays they experimented in arena and open stage production with a documentary script, specially written for them, called *New Year Circus*.

The J.D.L. is offering a new service for school parties accompanied by a teacher. This would include 1½ hours' practical work for the children under a specialist tutor; and meanwhile the teacher can use the J.D.L. Library! Enquiries to Miss Oxenford at 9 Fitzroy Square.

## Staff Playwright

The London University Drama Society is presenting the first play of a dramatist among the Staff of the B.D.L. This is A. L. Pattison, an article from whose pen appears in this number. *Dispersal* is set on a bomber station during the last war, and is written in verse. It will be produced by E. Martin Browne.

## Christmas Classes and Lectures

All the J.D.L. members, and many more besides, have attended some of these sessions. The demand for classes was much greater than space would allow for, and the lectures drew audiences of 300-500. Variety was the notable feature of this year's programme: a visit to *Puss in Boots* with a question period afterwards; the "creation" of Falstaff, in make-up and costume, by Paul Rogers; a happy, hard-working "Day in the Life of a Drama Student" from the L.A.M.D.A., and an hour with the Bradens and their current show. The first and last programmes used scenery and lighting which added a pleasure not before included in the series. The L.A.M.D.A. lecture was illustrated by a group of students who displayed a truly wonderful degree of physical relaxation and showed the benefit of it in acting practice. Paul Rogers in his "dressing-room" on the stage of Wyndham's, sipping his cup of tea as he enlarged himself to gargantuan size, let his audience share the mind of an actor, shaping his imagination along with his body to the part.

## A Variety of Festivals

Last year I adjudicated for the second time the Welwyn Festival, a most pleasurable task. This Festival, held in the Cinema of the Garden City, has attracted for many years one of the best audiences for amateur drama in the country. Thanks to this solid and discriminating support, teams are willing to come from a distance to act along with the local ones; the atmosphere is friendly and the expense-allowances are generous. The result is a week of good theatregoing. This year's Festival runs from June 4th to 9th. The adjudicator will be John Fernald.

In the previous week (May 28th to June 2nd) I shall be adjudicating a full-length play Festival which is just as successful, and for similar reasons, at Felixstowe. The Spa Pavilion is a fully equipped theatre seating 977 (about the same number as Welwyn) and to play in it clearly offers a pleasure worth a long journey. Among the winners or runners-up since 1951 have been teams from Edinburgh, South Wales, Bristol, London and the U.S.A.A.F.

In recent years a number of great industrial and commercial concerns have built up their own Festivals. Among them is Richard Thomas & Baldwins Ltd., the great steel combine, and this year I am adjudicating a Festival of nine sessions for them at Ebbw Vale (March 3rd-10th).

Ulster Drama is fighting hard to keep its audience in face of TV, and realises that a rise in standards is the only effective weapon. Schools and advisory visits will be offered, with the financial assistance of the Carnegie Trust. This Battle of the Standards will, I hope, show results in the Full-Length Play Festival which I am to adjudicate in the Grand Opera

House, Belfast (May 7th-12th), and also in the One-Act Festival from which the winner comes to our International Final.

That double event—English Final in the afternoon, English-Scottish-Welsh-Northern Irish Final in the evening—is at the Scala on Saturday, June 16th.

The Letchworth Festival will be held from May 6th to 12th, 1956, at St. Francis Theatre. E.M.B.

## Entertainments Tax

The Tax is still with us. This is due to the country's economic position rather than to lack of sympathy in Parliament; and it may be thought that in the present circumstances no plea for relief is justified. We believe this to be a totally mistaken view. The theatre is an essential part of our national life, and its survival is at stake. More theatres have been closed in the provinces since last year's claim was submitted to the Chancellor; and the ground which is being lost weekly will take years to make up. It is false economy not to remit now the £2m. of taxation that will save many millions in the future.

We therefore ask members of the League to approach their M.P.s once more, in anticipation of a memorandum which will be sent to the new Chancellor in advance of April's budget. An abstract of this memorandum for your use in such approaches will be sent to all who ask for it and to all who helped the theatre's campaign in this way last year.

## Rates Up

Many member companies are faced with greatly increased assessments under the Rating and Valuation Act, 1955, affecting either the little theatres they own or the halls in which they play. The League is advising as to whether in such cases there is any ground for claiming reduction of rates: but for this purpose the Constitution of the company must be submitted to it for examination.

## A Member Society

The Carthusian Playreading Society—so-called because when started it consisted of Old Carthusians, with their relatives and friends—celebrated its two-hundredth meeting on January 2nd, 1956.

Started in 1927, it has continued regularly except during the war years, with an average membership of sixteen. An immense variety of plays has been read, Shakespeare leading with nineteen plays, followed by Barrie with twelve and Shaw with ten.

Although books are normally sent to readers a week before each meeting to allow for study, an occasional diversion is to read a detective play without having studied it beforehand, so that members do not know who is murderer or who murdered, and this keeps them very alert. Other play-reading societies may like to try this experiment.

H. L. GANDELL

## The "A.G.M."

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the British Drama League held at 10 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1, on Thursday, December 15th, 1955, The Viscount Esher, G.B.E. (President) in the Chair.

1. *The Minutes of the last meeting, circulated in the Spring, 1955, number of DRAMA, were approved.*

### Life Membership

2. *re Art. 6 in the Articles of the Company:* Mr. Ivor Brown proposed, Mr. Martin Browne seconded and it was resolved:—

That as from December 15th, 1955, the subscription for a Life Member be raised from twelve to twenty guineas.

### Report and Accounts

3. *The Annual Report* was presented by Mr. Ivor Brown, Chairman of Council and Executive. He expressed his pleasure at having been elected Chairman of a body doing such valuable work, and selected for mention the new Reading Room, the Exhibition of *Drama in Education* prepared by Miss Lambourne, the quality of *DRAMA*, and the high standard of the winner of the National Festival. He felt that the League's campaign for the reduction of Entertainments Tax had further improved its relations with the profession. He paid a tribute to the work of the staff. Mr. Martin Browne seconding, the Report was adopted.

4. *The Audited Accounts* were presented by the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Charles Trott. He said the Accounts showed the effect of a full year's subscription at the increased rate. Much had had to be spent on the buildings, but Lord Howard de Walden's generous gift had covered most of this. The small surplus was a better result than last year's but still not sufficient. Mr. Arthur Jones seconding with appreciation of the Treasurer's care and wisdom, the Accounts were adopted.

5. *Auditors.* Mr. Arthur Jones proposed, Miss Janet Scrutton seconded and it was resolved:—

That Messrs. D. M. Vaughan and Co. be re-elected auditors for the year 1956.

### A Teaching Theatre

6. Mr. J. L. N. Ogden, British Railways L.M.R. (London) Dramatic Society, proposed:—

That this meeting, recognising the value to member societies of the League's Training Department and its influence in this and other countries, and seeing that its work is seriously hampered by the present inadequate accommodation, urges the Council to proceed with an immediate appeal to members and to other persons and bodies interested for help in building a teaching theatre at the rear of the League's Headquarters.

Mr. Ogden said: "The Society which I have the honour to represent is one of the older affiliated societies to the British Drama

League, and one which aims at a high standard of performance. In the pursuit of this aim it has arranged for many years courses of instruction for its members. This year Miss Mackenzie organised for it a comprehensive course, which created so much enthusiasm that a further course has already been arranged. The opening session of the course was held in the Practice Theatre and Miss Mackenzie apologised for its obvious deficiencies, which severely restricted stage training in certain respects but which could not be remedied for lack of funds. Here was the reason for my present proposal. While the existence of a theatre at all in this tumbledown mews-building is a masterpiece of ingenuity, it is clear that no one envisaged when these premises were acquired the international importance which the League would acquire. Students are trained here from most of the civilised countries of the world, a great many of them as teachers who should be able to model their own theatres on that in which they received their training.

"The British Drama League has never compromised on its standards of artistic taste; but its inadequate premises constitute a threat to those standards, a challenge that cannot be ignored. It is with a strong conviction that we must create a training theatre commensurate with the League's great prestige that I move this resolution."

Miss Josephine Daintree, A.D.B., seconding, said: "I should like to draw your attention to the words *recognising the value of the League's Training Department and its influence in this and other countries*. As a student at both week-end and full-time courses I have been able to realise this value and this influence on those who came literally from all parts of the world. We were presented with the highest possible standards and coaxed into making them our own both in practice and appreciation. We were sent back to our own jobs, many of them in schools, eager to share the discoveries we had made and to go on making new ones.

"Lately another sphere of influence has been added in the newly-formed Junior Drama League. This consists of those who will be the theatre audiences and the amateurs of the future. For them, as well as for the adult students, the work is seriously hampered by the present inadequate accommodation. The Christmas classes were fully booked within a few days of being announced; many requests for places, even 'to come and stand in the doorway in case someone falls out', had to be refused for lack of space. The enthusiasm is there and is having to be damped down.

"The same is true for playwrights who have worked for months on scripts under tuition and want to try them out in rehearsal; for producers burning to experiment; for stage managers who cannot learn their job properly in a building so unlike a proper theatre. So we come to the proposal: and it demands the enthusiasm of all members and member

societies. We are the League, and we must work for it, raise money for it, and see that the teaching theatre is built."

Mr. Fielder, a distinguished architect who is also a drama student, presented a scheme for the proposed theatre. (Plans and his report can be seen at the League's Headquarters.)

The Hon. Treasurer expressed sympathy with the motion but urged that it should be accepted only with a full sense of responsibility for the very large outlay involved.

Mr. Ogden said his own society had already agreed to give the net proceeds of one performance towards the cost, and felt that a large number of member societies might be prepared to do likewise.

The Resolution was carried unanimously.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the President.

### A SWISS FESTIVAL

The Lucerne Festival, mainly a musical event, presents each year one outstanding theatrical production. Its organisation seems to me remarkable, for it is firmly bound to the normal theatrical life of this town.

It will be instructive therefore to consider how the Lucerne theatre, the usual medium-sized Central European "Stadttheater", is run during the winter season. It is moderately subsidised by local authorities and presents drama, opera and operetta in repertoire. An ensemble of actors and another of singers are permanently employed. So are an orchestra, a chorus, conductors, *répétiteurs*, producers for all three media, designers, costumiers, a complement of carpenters, hairdressers and other necessary staff. The whole functions under the leadership of the director who is also producer-in-chief and responsible for policy. The building, typical of such theatres, stands by itself and is large enough to accommodate scene docks capable of holding many productions. This enables the theatre to change plays daily and to carry them on into another season. So in the field of drama alone the programme for the forthcoming season includes Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, *King Lear*, three German classics, plays by Wilde, Zuckmayer, Hauptmann, Fry, Montherlant, an American comedy and a Christmas fairy play.

For the festival play the resident company and staff are used, augmented by a few distinguished guest artists. The theatre's director, Ernst Dietz, produces, and the musical director and designer are from the permanent ensemble. All three are used to working and creating as a team, and they know their theatre, staff and cast. As a result a rare unity of production can be achieved.

Last year the play was *Mariana Pineda*, by Federico Garcia Lorca. He called it "a popular romanza" and the enlarged romanza form gives its shape to the play. The prologue is the original song, the epilogue a repetition of the last verse. The theme, based on historical fact,



MARIA BECKER in "Mariana Pineda"

Photograph by Baur of Zurich

is the Spanish nobility's fight for constitutional rights against a fickle monarch and his minions. Mariana, a high-born young widow, is drawn into this through love, almost by accident. Betrayed like the others, she matures. In her own eyes she becomes a symbol of freedom and so is ready to face the final choice between life and death. A beautiful piece of play-writing, this; to create a heroine who is always gentle, almost passive, yet leaving the ultimate choice in her hands.

Poetry and rhythm run through this play. They are so strong that even a translation with some weak points can still convey the essence of it. It becomes the main feature of the production. Music and decor collaborate admirably with the actors. Noises off are never used; they would break the essential musical flow of language and action. Instead live guitar music throughout subtly knits it together. The stage floor has been raised on blocks, making it a soundboard for the swishing of the women's full skirts and the clicking of the Spanish heels. This gives the

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**UNSELFISH ONE, THE**, by Gregory Page. 5 f. Farm kitchen. Who is to carry on when the farmer dies? His two middle-aged daughters have been estranged but come together when they see the importance of the farm—and the value they are to each other and the younger generation. 2/-.

**GLORIA**, by Conrad Carter. 4 f. Showroom of a hat shop. Brief comedy of a snobbish customer and how she is dealt with by an actress posing as a saleswoman. 1/6.

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production an extraordinary acoustic definition that I have never met before. It pervades the play and becomes part of it. The visual rhythm corresponds and rarely have I seen candlelight and costumes and the fluidity of the actors' positions so beautifully part of one creation.

The title role was played by Maria Becker. This actress is famous in the German-speaking theatre, and well known here, for her renderings of classical verse. Her great gift is the union of perfect verse speaking with deep humanity.

DOROTHEA ALEXANDER

## THE AUSTRALIAN SCENE

I was recently invited to address a W.E.A. Summer School on the Problems of the Little Theatres. Exactly what may be included under this classification is hard to define in a country which has at present only one professional repertory—Melbourne Union—with a home of its own. The oldest and biggest amateur society (in Adelaide) has a membership running into thousands and its new theatre will be larger than the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. The most recent instance of a group's finding a theatre for itself is at Brisbane, where the *Twelfth Night* group has acquired a building with an auditorium seating about 180, where it can put on a succession of shows; in the same city the University is to follow Perth's example by providing itself with an open-air theatre in a woodland setting.

Sydney has the unenviable distinction of being the worst equipped of major cities in Australia—and probably in the world—so far as places in which amateurs can play are concerned, and indeed in this respect lags behind many country centres.

The basic essentials for theatre are places and people; of the latter there is no lack of potential recruits for the stage. What does need building up in our community is the right kind of audience. The League has achieved something in this direction during the past twelve months by mobilising its Sydney members to attend outstanding professional performances, with a total of over 12,000 tickets taken.

Apparently some amateur groups have misgivings that the Elizabethan Drama Company will, as a question directed to Mr. Hunt phrased it, "skim the cream off the small theatres." His obvious answer was that this Company will provide a goal for stage aspirants; that Little Theatres can be a recruiting ground for students in the School that he proposes to establish, and that amateur groups will benefit eventually by this widening prospect of opportunity for individual talent.

Little Theatres hitherto have provided the only try-out places for Australian playwrights. The problem of the Australian play for the Australian theatre has so far proved baffling,

and the Playwrights' Advisory Board, which has laboured for eighteen years to solve it might well have wearied in well-doing. The results of the Jubilee Playwrights' Competition in 1951 were discouraging; the winning plays were broadcast, but none reached the boards—and one must confess that they were more suited to radio than to stage presentation. This is natural in a country where the playwright's only market is on the air.

The Trust has already subsidised the performance of an Australian play by the Theatre for Playwrights, and the results of the latest Playwrights' Advisory Board Competition are much more promising. The Board found, in addition to the two winners, five plays on which it bestowed high commendation. The winning plays follow Yeats's advice to a pioneer Australian playwright, "Write country comedies. Such comedies build up a country where dramas of ideas tend to divide and shatter it." One of them, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, about Queensland cane-cutters on holiday in the South, after a successful try-out at Melbourne Union is opening at the Elizabethan Theatre in Sydney tonight (January 10th).

E. M. TILDESLEY

## REPERTORY ENTERPRISE

*Some of the plays given their first production during the last quarter of 1955, compiled from material made available by Spotlight Casting Directory.*

AMERSHAM Playhouse. *The Lion in the Lighthouse*, by Billy Thatcher and Rolf King. 3 f., 8 m.

BARNSELY Theatre Royal. *What's Cooking*, by Joan Brampton. 6 f., 3 m., 1 set.

FARNHAM Repertory Company. *The Dual Heart*, by S. M. Burnett. 3 f., 4 m. Romantic play adapted from *Notre Cœur* by Guy de Maupassant. Costume, late 19th century.

GUILDFORD Theatre Company. *The Iron Harp*, by Joseph O'Connor. 1 f., 10 m., 1 set. Tragedy of the Irish "Troubles".

HIGH WYCOMBE, Intimate Theatre. *Rising Heifer*, by Robin Maugham. 5 f., 7 m. Comedy on secrets of levitation. *The Woman Who Called*, by Leila Forde. 5 f., 3 m. Murder mystery.

HORNCHURCH Theatre Trust. *Mayor's Nest*, by Pauline and John Phillips. 3 f., 6 m., 1 set. Farce. *Price of Fame*, by Wilfred Massey. 5 f., 4 m., 1 set.

LEATHERHEAD Repertory Company. *People With Property*, by Neil Macmillan. 6 f., 5 m., 1 set. Lowlands of Scotland.

MARGATE Theatre Royal. *Flat Spin*, by Kevin Sheldon. 4 f., 6 m., 1 set. Comedy in a "bed-sitter".

NORTHAMPTON Repertory Company. *The Running Man*, by Anthony Armstrong and Arnold Ridley. 3 f., 7 m. Dartmoor Inn.

PETERBOROUGH, Court Players. *The Good Old Days*, by Armitage Owen. 4 f., 6 m., 1 set. *It's a Small World*, by Lawrence Storm. 5 f., 5 m., 1 set. Domestic Comedy.



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